STORIES FROM GEORGE MIRES

PREFACE.

It is intended in these modest tales, to give a picture of the intimate life of the Pioneers who flocked to Central Alberta during the great Trek which began in 1904. They rely for their justification upon the fact that every incident is the exact and unvarnished account of personal experience, and they are told as simply as the life was lived. The Author has no expert knowledge and makes no pretense of presenting more than a readable revealation of the early struggles of the thousands who left home and relations, to make a new start in a wonderful and beautiful country.

The events and environment of these tales are personal, yet the conditions prevailing over the Prairie Provinces are so nearly similar that, though the facts may vary slightly, pretty much the same joys and sorrows as are depicted here, are common to all who joined the army of immigrants which raised the wheat production of Canada from ten-million, to five-hundred million bushels in little more than a decade.

Perhaps the dominating factor in the lives of the first Settlers was self-denial --- at least there was nothing fast or clever about them, and the Author has tried to establish this atmosphere of simple leisureliness, trusting that the Rands Reader will observe this tempo in his all-important part in arriving at a sympathetic understanding.

Edgerton
Alberta
April 1937.

1529 words

One.

By G. Douglas Miles.

It is a beautiful sparkling morning in January, the sun is shining in a flood of golden glory on the dazzling snow of the countryside and although it is twenty° below zero, the air is perfectly still and it is delightful to be outside in the fresh crisp exhilaration of a typical Alberta winters day. The morning chores are finished and a hearty breakfast disposed of, Mother is busy already with the coming dinner and the various duties of a house with children to care for and Dad is reading the paper in an easy chair, conscious that the animals are well cared for and everything running sweetly with his little world, indoors and out, and the perennial novelty and zest of winter has not yet had time to become tiresome.

Little Norman is a bonny boy of five years and already able to take the easy slopes in good style on his small skis, with a fine contempt for cold weather and scornful of restraint, eager to escape the carefulness of a loving Mother. This lovely morning, he must of course go out to play, and after some argument with Mum is finally permitted, but not for too long and he must not go far away as it is colder than it looks. The stock well is quite shallow and is worked by a small cistern pump which Master Norman is well able to use, so Dad, thinking of something to amuse the boy and keep him within bounds, suggests that he go to the well and if any cattle are there he may pump some water for them. This commission is received with great enthusiasm, and his importance as he marches away, the proud smile suffusing his Mother's face as she watches him pass out of sight through the window combine to form a picture which time cannot dim. After what seemed like only a few minutes to Dad, he is asked to go after the boy, as he has been out long enough, but this is countered with the retort that seeing the way she wrapped the boy up, he might stay out for-ever. However, after an interval Mother goes to the door and coo-ees without result, unless it is that Dad is ordered now instead of being asked. So putting on hat and mitts, Dad strolls around the end of a bluff where he can see the pump-house and corrals and bawls to the boy to come on home, but meets with no response after repeating the call which is quite unusual, and as the little chap has now been out for over an hour, Dad too begins to realize that something could happen. A quick march to the stables and a thorough search reveals nothing and as the land is clear for

a considerable distance around, an element of mystery comes into the situation. He thinks of the pigs and is quickly there though he knows that the boy is well used to them and would not think of climbing into the pens, but by now anything is possible. The farmyard is not large and to get no response to ones call is a poser indeed and it is unthinkable that the boy would suddenly march clean out of the picture as he would have put on his skis if he had any intention of being disobedient and running off. Not having put a coat on Dad began to realize seriously that it certainly was not so warm as it looked from indoors, and now that sick feeling in the stomach would no longer be denied...it is a tremendous struggle to reach the top of a haystack, but no sign of the boy is seen from there and he comes down too quickly and limps, though he is barely aware of this. Suddenly he thinks of the pump-house, which is a small low building made of heavy logs with no windows and only a small door facing away from the rest of the buildings... it is necessary to climb a wire fence from where Dad is, to get there and he tears his clothes, he rushes to the building and opens the heavy door which has the habit of closing by itself...and Master Norman returns to the story. In order to understand what had happened it is necessary to go into some detail regarding this little building. When the door was closed it was just about impervious to sound as there was only one small hole through the north wall through which a V-shaped trough made by nailing two boards together passed from the spout of the pump to the water-trough. As this conduit had hardly enough down slope a little water would back up and run down the pump, forming in time a mass of ice on the floor and Norman had been pumping and allowing this back-flow to trickle around his rubber boots until he had become frozen solidly to the ground. When Dad got there his face was a flaming red with indignation and his feet were beginning to freeze but a few clips with the axe freed him and he was dressed so warmly that no harm resulted in any way. Twenty below may be a lovely day to work or play but it is not difficult to realize that a delay of another hour and this story might have been a pathetic account of how Norman lost his feet. At minus twenty, water freezes pretty rapidly but it was one chance in a thousand that a boy would keep still long enough for such a thing to happen and I can only suppose that he stopped pumping and stood still listening or looking like a boy will and did not notice that his feet were stuck

and then went on pumping again, his boots being just stuck tight enough to withstand his involuntary movements and when he did realize that he was fast, it was too late for him to break loose, especially as he would not fall down and resort to desperate measures as a man would, though there is really not much one can do in a case of this kind as very little levērage is obtainable with one's ankles. Most children in cold ~~xxxxtrixxxxxxxxxxx~~ countries have to stick their tongues on the pump and yell until help comes to free them with warm water and this can be a very nasty business if the delay is at all long. I remember one day being a mile from home cutting firewood when it was forty below zero and when I became a little thirsty, resorted to my usual bad habit of picking up a little snow on the blade of the axe and licking it off, without of course touching the axe. This day I carelessly made a mistake and licked down to the steel and my tongue became instantly frozen to it. I made an involuntary movement to free myself but was not stoic enough to tear it away pulling the skin off which is the only method apart from thawing the metal, so I started off for home in a panic and had not taken a dozen steps before falling asprawl, which parted me from the axe without any by your leave, after which I spent a very painful week until my tongue became comfortable again. Coal-oil and gasoline can give one a considerable surprise as they do not freeze and it is possible to plunge ones hand in at a temperature from fifty to sixty below zero. Just what would be the result I do not know as no-one has ever done this in my vicinity, but I do know that it is impossible to hold a funnel while pouring from the can which is left outdoors, for more than a few seconds, unless ones fingers are protected. To splash a few spots on the hand at forty below burns like a spot of pure sulphuric acid. Sound seems to travel farther in a cold temperature to my mind though I do not know what science would have to say ab out it. But I have listened to my neighbour on a winter morning sawing firewood and heard the piece fall to the ground very distinctly and could hear the words of the song he was quietly singing at intervals, though he was just a mile away by the survey, with a thick growth of trees between us. The trees are frozen quite solid in a low temperature and we have to be careful not to grind our axes too thin as it is sure to be the cause of gashes breaking out in the finest steel. If the ground is wet in the fall it will freeze to a depth of six to eight feet during the winter according to what snow protection it has and in the Klondyke it is still frozen though we dig down sixty feet.

Yet my steel axe was hot if compared with the absolute zero which science has almost attained. I have never seen any sign of the air freezing in nature.

1678

Two.

By C. Douglas Miles.

After Pat had left me for the purpose of making some real money and with the intention of returning with sufficient capital to boost his farming operations to a satisfactory speed, my Brother Percy sent me out a penniless young man from England, paying his fare, who came on the understanding that I was to procure him a homestead and start him up, just as I was doing with Pat. This arrangement worked well, but Tom decided that he preferred city life soon after getting title to his land, selling out and going to Vancouver, where he has a family and is doing comfortably to-day. I batched it for three years before getting married and was luckily initiated into the right method of making sour-dough pancakes at the beginning, and can vouch for them being the healthiest and nicest food possible, especially when covered with maple syrup. But the making is an art not to be achieved at the first attempt, which is perhaps why professional cooks do not regard them as part of the cult, thereby relegating a real luxury to the backwoods.

One summers evening soon after Tom came, when the last chores were done and we were idling and preparing for bed, a black bear slouched up and looked in at the door as I stood looking out, turning away at once. As we had never seen a bear outside of a Zoo it looked small to me and I called to Tom to come and look at the big pig, with which animal I was no better acquainted, but a second inspection gave the true diagnosis and the war was on. by the time I had reached for the ;303 rifle, found it empty and hunted up shells, located the axe, having visions of a hand-to-hand conflict, the Bear was out of sight around a bluff. At first we had imagined a battle in which the Bear would attack us, but we now saw the possibility of its getting away with nothing done, giving us the feeling that we were the agressors and boosting our courage as we rushed out to do or die. Neither of us knew anything about shooting and had only shot the gun a few times to see if it shot straight (deciding that it didn't) and we had read plenty of hunting stories, filling our minds with pictures of the ferocity of a wounded animal, being in fact, plenty nervous, having no confidence in our shooting ability with a rifle.

But an opportunity like this could not be allowed to pass for very shame, so we marched bravely on, the Bear turning into the bluff to avoid us as we came in sight. This action again renewed our courage finally disposing of any craven doubts and we rushed round to head him off as he came out, though Tom was so innocent that he would

have attacked a Grizzly with equal abandon. As I had read too much and knew too little, I had visions of buck-fever which is supposed to overcome the novice, and as Mr Bear came out, I handed Tom the gun, taking the axe, and told him to shoot, thinking to watch him "on the stage" and then grab the gun to save our lives while he was in the throes of buck-fever, which, as it happened, exactly came to pass. As the Bear came out Tom shot at a range of about twenty feet and the luck was with us, the bullet passing through the shoulder and lungs. More quickly than one can think, the Bear was on his head and as quickly on his heels again and must have done this at express speed for a minute, what time Tom stood gazing with his mouth open a foot and I was yelling to him to shoot again. Just as the Bear made off I grabbed the gun and got in another lucky one but he continued on down into a slough like a streak, with Tom and me after him on the run being now in a state of jubilation and afraid he would get away. It was now just about dark and as I was hampered with the gun and the axe, Tom got about thirty or forty feet ahead, and the first thing we knew, he fell over the Bear which was lying down in the dry slough, mortally wounded, and as the Bear and Tom both stood up together, I could not tell which was which in the dark and yelled again to Tom to come away so I could shoot again. As soon as Tom moved I could tell positively and shot again, hitting the Bear in the snout, whereupon he gave the most fearful exhibition of snorting and grunting, sinking slowly to the ground. We crept up and wasted another shell at point blank range, as it was the first shot which killed the Bear and all we had to do was to keep quiet and await the end if we had known. Yes, a little experience and that whole glorious battle would have been no more than killing a pig and we should have missed a really splendid adventure, the pride and uplift of victory would have passed us by instead of quickening our veins with the elixir of life. But we believed, and ignorance was bliss and there are so many things in life at which we are not experts, so perhaps we should not grieve too much when we discover that we were not so brave or clever as we thought.

Nearly five-hundred pounds of good meat was a welcome addition to our sow-belly diet, being as tender and tasty as anything I have ever eaten and still good when salted and kept. We gave a neighbour a chunk the next day and went to supper, Tom beating me by eating a plateful more than I was good for. The good lady cooked a chunk as large as the oven would take, for five hours , the result, with mashed potatoes, being perfection followed by real pie, making a meal for hungry bachelors sick of their own cooking which lingers in my memory still, especially the fact that I was enjoying it for hours after the meal ended, not having eaten for the pleasure of it for a very long time.

We were quite impressed with the brutes fearsome appearance as he lay dead the next morning, in the daylight, and measured the forearm, making it fourteen inches around and enjoyed imagining what a box on the ears would be like from him. The stomach contained ants and earth, his last meal evidently being an ant heap.

Horses are very much afraid of the smell of a Bear and it is difficult to get them to pass over a track. I was one day driving through a wood trail and saw a Bear cross quite a distance in front and of course the horses saw him before I did. They made no fuss until we came to his track when they stopped dead and refused to cross. I was busy slashing them with the end of the lines when they suddenly took a tremendous jump froward spilling me out behind and they ran a mile before I caught them.

There were quite a number of Lynx in the district in the first years and many were caught and shot but none have been heard of for many years now. The red fox, a most beautiful little creature was also fairly plentiful and has now disappeared entirely.

Beaver were found in places along the river and creeks and the Muskrat was plentiful all over but have both disappeared though they would soon be back if let alone and the moisture returned to the land, fields which were ten feet under water when we came now being ploughed every year. Crows are becoming thicker and do an immense amount of harm to the small birds which are obliged to nest in more exposed places now that so much land has been cleared. Our cats seem to have a passion for birds but they are not worth mentioning beside the Crows and the Dogs seldom catch up with a rabbit, which seems to be their one ambition. Speaking of dogs, when I was eleven years old I was sitting in the garden at home reading a book, when a large dog came through the gate, his jaws dripping saliva and his general appearance was so alarming that when I saw him coming straight for me I was so terrified that I could not move. He was in no hurry, but there was no hesitation, as though he expected to find me there, padding the whole length of the walk, placing two huge paws on my lap and was just reaching for my neck with his fangs, when our little Terrier suddenly spied him and ran forward, making a terrific commotion. The brute now whirled round and set upon the little dog, while I ran screaming indoors crying that "Joss" was being killed. My Father came tearing down from upstairs having taken in the situation, grabbed a broom from the kitchen as he passed through and without missing a step, was pounding the daylights out of the murderous hound, following him to the street, but he got away and we never heard any more about him. We comforted our poor little pet and dressed his wounds, but the next morning he was missing and it was almost a week after when my Father heard him whimpering at the door after supper. Upon bringing him in it was discovered that he was blind and dripping saliva, being in the last stage of hydrophobia, so there was nothing to be done but kill him as quickly as possible.

This was one of my many narrow escapes and I still believe that I was spared for some wise purpose, and wonder what it is going to be.

1603
2002

Three,

By G. Douglas Niles

We have a goodly number of Norwegian neighbours who in the early days would send for young fellows from Norway to help them with the work and among them would be a fair number of ski jumpers, some of them men who had done big things in that sport at home and who were naturally keen to keep it up. This is the reason that our district was for many years a centre of the sport and we finally had the largest jump between Winnipeg and British Columbia. A good number of young boys who were not Norwegians took whole-heartedly to the sport and Became expert skiers, making fine leaps of around one-hundred feet, but it was found that unless one called a "jug" a Yug" it was impossible to reach the top notch. And this appears to hold good for the children of Norwegians born in this country who seem to lose their skiing genius in exchange for speaking English like a native, though of course, the real reason is that our snow condition is seldom good in a good year and some years no skiing is done at all. And the secret of reaching the top at this sport, like many other things, is practise, and then more practise. We have had such talent as Nordmoe, Leheim, Gunnar Aasen Paul Gotaas etc: at our tournaments and those who know anything about skiing in the West will need no introduction to these fine artists. My own children came just right for the boom in this district and all became expert, their enthusiasm being unbounded for many years, so much so that they could not go even to the stable without skis and I have known them to ski to school, a distance of two and one-half miles, when at least half the distance must have been bare ground. It happened that we had a succession of good snow years when they were young and they would ski every afternoon even though it was forty below zero, getting home late for chores with their faces scarlet from the exercise and cold. I am confident that this fine sport has been the foundation of their good health and that they will look back upon those afternoons and the thrill of having famous men at our tournaments to worship, as the high water mark of their childhood and youth. One cold windy day I had some important papers to be signed by a client and was regretting the necessity pretty badly, when my son Norman offered to take them for me on his skis and I was only too pleased to stay home on such a day. He made the round trip of thirty-four miles without stopping, arriving back as fit as he left, when this would have been a hard trip for my team which would have taken hours longer than this fifteen year old boy required. Jumping requires great skill and nerve

but skiing is of real practical value, as we have seen, even in this district where the snow conditions are far from good. Now that this sport has gone out of fashion around here, I find that the farm boys have no outdoor game at all, skating parties being few and far between owing to the amount of work required to keep the ice clear of snow which drifts back continually. To become an expert skier it is necessary to commence quite young and maintain a strenuous course of practise and like seamanship, must be lived and loved if one hopes to become one of the elect. The worlds record jump is now around three-hundred-thirty feet, but this will mean nothing except to those who need no telling. The skis themselves are the result of a century of thought and experiment, a perfect pair being treasured by their owner, their grace, beauty and utility being essential to his art. It is indeed a grand sight to watch an expert descend the long hill at a speed of over forty miles an hour, soar into the air at the jump and gracefully alight hundreds of feet lower, to continue his breathless career, and one can only imagine the pure delight which comes to the artist in the attainment of his hearts desire.

My Norwegian friend Mr O. Aasen, skied across the river to visit friends in our bachelor days, and allowed me to accompany him, tempering his speed to my amateur pace, and when we had just accomplished the hard work of ascending the further river-bank, Aasen, in taking his skis from his shoulder, carelessly allowed one to drop, and though he grabbed like a cat, it got away and went sailing merrily to the bottom, a distance of three-quarters of a mile. Without saying a word (and blessed is the man upon whom silence descends at such a time) he put both feet on the remaining ski and followed after, standing until he stopped, although it was rough and steep and the wind of his great speed rendered him blind. A little hot temper about this! but one had only to see it done to realize the thousands of hours of hard skiing which led up to such a feat and to marvel at the apparently inborn skill of the Norwegian. This same friend was once standing in the end of an open wagon-box when the team suddenly jumped forward with fright, spilling him backwards without an instants warning, but he landed on one foot and one hand, becoming erect on the instant and catching the team before they had got far.

Anyone who has ever been spilled out of a wagon-box backwards will agree that no upset is more calculated to render one helpless and I believe that only the sub-conscious balance of a ski jumper could give one command of such a situation. An acrobat would qualify, of course. So heres to skiing and the great little nation which brought it adown the slopes of time to become such a perfect and useful sport, capable of testing a mans nerve and skill to the limit in friendly rivalry.

Alberta has long had the honour of making the game of basket-ball famous, the Edmonton Grads having been the World's Lady Champions for many years, while we have produced some of the greatest Ice-hockey players, (including Murray Murdoch, the Iron man of Hockey, who was an Edgerton boy) Canada as a whole being supreme at this sport, with no serious competitors yet in sight. But I must keep within my own β sphere and write only of the things of which I know and have lived, trusting that my modest philosophies which have become part of me as a result of my life and thought, will not be taken amiss. For my own part, I have always been more interested in what a man thinks and believes, rather than in what he has seen and done, so whether my emotions and reactions are true or false, wise or foolish, I must at least put them down in order to give my readers a fair chance to decide whether our life here is a pattern to follow or a horrible example, hoping it may prove something between these fearsome extremes.

Although my life has been distinctly an outdoor one, I was early taught the value of books, and City or Country, I cannot remember ever being without a book in hand, and it has gradually dawned upon me that many people fail to put the right value upon this high-road to knowledge and wisdom. There is a sense in which it may be said that we cannot be told anything we do not already know, which statement I might elucidate by pointing out that, if the average farmer bought a book on the higher matematics, and read it for a year, he would know exactly nothing about the subject at the end. Just as we all feel that our ideas and theories have no reality until we have discussed them with another, or added to them another dimension by writing, so what we learn from books will remain more or less visionary until we have made some practical use of it. We go to school as children to be taught how to learn, and we should read books in order to learn how to think, finding a real pleasure in the process. As a young man I devoted a period of my reading to Polar Exploration, following all the famous arctic voyages step by step, and living in a forty below zero country, was able to live the life with them very vividly in imagination, arriving at a true understanding of all they suffered and accomplished. Yet for any practical purpose, I learned very little, though well able to give a lecture on the subject, if anyone would listen; which shows how right people are in refusing to read or listen to anyone except the man who actually did the work, as even he can only tell us a little, and we shall not grasp all he tells.

Yet, I still feel a real satisfaction in my reading of that period, and know that I learned a lot; at least, I thought deeply, I sympathised and worshipped, I arose from my book with renewed ambition, and there can be no doubt that if I had been called upon at that time, to become a member of an arctic expedition, I should have become useful much more quickly because of my theoretical knowledge. My point is that I only learned what I already knew, for any practical purpose, but I also learned what a lot I do not know, such as finding ones position by the sun etc:, and as the French say "He who knows he knows nothing, already knows something".

No person is able to think clearly if he is unable to state his meaning in exact language, and only the reading of good books can give one this faculty of expressing anything above the most ordinary and simple ideas. I remember a certain telephone conversation I had with a neighbour, many years ago, which will illustrate my meaning. After getting my party, I asked "Can you comeover next Wednesday at ten o'clock to help me kill a pig?" to which I got the reply "Oh, I guess so". But we had now just begun the conversation. After saying "Thanks", I was just about to hang up, when the following ensued, Party, "When do you want to kill it?"

Myself, "Next Wednesday"
Party, "Oh yes, I guess I can make it"
Myself, "Alright then, I'll be expecting you"
Party, "Do you want me to come before dinner?"
Myself, "Yes, I'll have everything ready at ten o'clock"
Party "O.K. I'll try and be there then".
Myself, "Thanks".

Now, Mr Party was a highly intelligent man and I knew that there would be no guessing or trying about it, and he was there on the dot. He understood me perfectly the first time, and it never entered his head that I might mean ten o'clock at night, and the rigmarole was entirely due to the fact that he never read a book or thought about anything that he could not see and touch. And yet reading, along with most other forms of true education, seems to unfit a man for making a living, the spiritual in any form being banned by our modern system of insanity, so that the ordinary businessman regards it as an indulgence of weaklings. As for me, now that I am unable to withstand cold and wet weather, instead of living in retrospect, my library calls me upward and outward; I renew my strength and mount up with wings of Eagles. The sad thing with the average money-maker, in the evening of life, is the knell, "Too late, Ye cannot enter now".

~~1292~~
1697

Four

By C. Douglas Miles

The flood of Colonists to Central Alberta developed an element of suddenness from the years 1905 to 1914, due to the building of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (now the Canadian National Railway), the capital being mostly supplied by the British investor who never received any returns or repayment. When I located my homestead in the fall of 1905 the Canadian Pacific railway had a line surveyed close by, but this was changed by the time I had invested my all, the line being diverted fifty miles south, leaving me with Lloydminister as the nearest town, a trip of forty-five miles. As we were very seldom in town and took no interest in newspapers, it was not until I was one day riding afer after a lost cow and ran plum into a construction camp, that I had the least idea that we were to have a railway within reasonable distance. It is difficult to picture my reaction to such an event, suddenly running on to a hundred men and between tow and three-hundred horses, when to have met another man on horse-back would have been a great surprise, and my first thought was that I had happened upon a little war. When I realized that it was actually a railway I almost fell off my horse with excitement, seeing visions of my land rising in value, the amenities of a town and myself back into the throbbing stream of humanity, after being convinced that fate had placed me in a backwater of life with instructions that I had to like it. This bringing together of so many nationalities and classes resulted in an unique farming community, this district being by far the most usual, where the people came together by chance, in spite of some small attempts to form communities by nationality. At first it was no uncommon thing to find oneself unable to speak with a neighbour or ones hired man, but now everyone speaks English and in another generation anything else will be extremely rare. Inter-marriage has a good deal to do with the dropping of other languages which would only be maintained as a matter of sentiment in any case, as where the Father speaks Norwegian as his native language and the Mother (say) French, they will use only English ~~and~~ as neither the Father or Mother would care to converse with the children in a language the other could not understand.

In such a case, no matter what the combination may be, the children will learn only English, and where the Parents are both of one nationality they use their own language mostly for sentimental reasons and the children always prefer English, especially after

they commence school and come into contact with the natural impoliteness of the English speaking boy. I can number among my neighbours who live within visiting distance, the following, as being the only language they could speak before coming to Canada .- Russian, Norwegian, Swedish, Roumanian, German, Ukranian, French, Polish, Hungarian and in every case, where there are children, they speak English with no foreign accent.

Apart from the Scandinavians, few of us were farmers before coming to Canada and I have been interested in noting the many and sometimes curious trades and professions which are represented in the persons of my neighbours, and I have discovered that this district is fairly representative of the whole of Alberta. We had for a time among us, an Animal Impersonator, straight from the cast of "The Wizard of Oz" (New York) but he was not enthused with farming and is now playing in London Eng:. We have a highly trained bootmaker from Slavonia and a German friend who is now dead was brought up to the banking business, having a fine classical education and landing in Canada with what we farmers would call a fortune, first becoming a professional photographer, being among the first to introduce colour-photography and had travelled with Buffalo Bill's Show as a photographer, having many pictures of Bill himself. Another man who is still with us (aged 85) was born in Eng: but came to Ontario as a young man where he worked at his profession as a maker of surveying instruments, married his employer's daughter and later becoming a professional singer, was already almost an old man when he took up his homestead and still delights in explaining to us how they obtained a special kind of spider's web which they used to make the cross lines on the lense of the telescope.

We had two master weavers capable of calculating and laying out designs in fabric, carpenters, bricklayers, miners, a marine engineer, a trig surveyor who had helped to survey part of Australia, a sailor from the Great Lakes, a blacksmith, old soldiers and two men straight from Klondyke, one of whom had a tidy fortune and the other claimed to have left machinery worth $40,000 behind, with which he had intended to bring water to his workings but found after buying it that the project was impossible.

One would think that such a diversity of talent would make for something exceptional in the way of progress, but I'm afraid this was not the case. We followed the usual procedure of making the roads around the sloughs, doing twice as much work to save labour, and then straightened them a few years after, our farmer's association died a

natural death, and the nearest to have come to a debating society, is a weekly waist-drive and Dance. One very old neighbour from Michigan told us that he had helped to burn the woods of acres of the finest birds-eye maple, in his young days, when clearing land in Ontario, and his stories of the old Michigan lumber camps were weird indeed.

It seems that a camp Boss had to be able to fight any man on the job and his ability as a slave-driver was such, that he had the men in the swamp, four miles from camp, an hour before it was light enough to see to work, merely to keep up the morale.

The men were so in need of sleep that on one occasion, when a man talked after the light was put out, a boot was thrown at him, depriving him of the sight of one eye, and so long as a man yelled "timber" just as an immense tree began to fall, it exonerated him from all blame, whoever was killed. Whenever cheap whiskey could be obtained there was a general free fight, but in their gentler moments, it was considered a subtle form of humour to chop off one leg of a man's trousers with an axe.

A lecturer coming into this district would need to be quite sure of his facts, as there would be surely someone in his audience who was more or less an expert , whatever the subject of his discourse might be, and one would indeed be simple, to speak in any language, trusting that he would not be understood.

In the days when all the world was young, my brother Percy accompanied his Violin Professor to the Austrian Tyrol for a visit to the Professor's home. Upon coming to a station where the train made a longer stop that usual, they left their hats and coats on their seats, (an unwritten law of possession) and proceeded to stroll along the platform for a constitutional and a cup of coffe. Upon returning to their carriage they found that two important ladies had taken possession of their seats, which was an affront not to be endured by experienced travellers, and a fairly lively argument ensued, conducted in English. However, the ladies, (knowing quite well from the first that they were in the wrong) finally accepted defeat, in a most ungracious manner, and Hans Wessely and his student resumed their seats, to the accompaniment of the gloomy silence of their fair but indignant opponents. After getting settled, my Brother and his Professor began to converse in German, upon which, the ladies STARTED telling each other exactly what they thought of the gentlemen, even unto the third and fourth generation, at a terrific speed and in quite intimate French. Hans Wessely was a polished man of the world, well able to

talk and listen simultaneously, so after enjoying the situation just long enough to be within the bounds of politeness, he leaned forward, and in his most crushing manner informed the ladies, in perfect French, that it was possible for a German to understand even that language.

I remember being at a card party here, where five languages were going strong during the intervals, the lingo being occasioned by some pleasant rivalry and not because it is the custom, though those who speak another language find it very convenient upon occasion, when speaking over the telephone. Our telephone line was constructed by the farmers and has from fifteen to twenty subscribers on each line, and as news is at a premium in the country, it is the custom for anyone who feels curious to listen in, even joining in the conversation if the spirit moves them.

In order to make the list of trades complete, I should mention that we had or did have, a city barber, an Upholsterer, a Cabinet-maker, and a Landscape Painter from a theatre, and of course Butchers are too common to mention, when we are all more or less artists at that business.

As it is the custom for college students to work their way through, it is not at all unusual to be waited on at a hotel, by a young lady who expects her B.A. in a few months, and medical students or embryo lawyers may be found doing anything, from stooking to peddling. During the late depression, we had two fully qualified Doctors working in the field in this district and I once had a Chartered Accountant stooking for me.

So, if I just put down our two locomotive Engineers and a qualified Druggist, who have done nothing but farm, for the past twenty years, the case for the prosecution may be allowed to rest

1201

Number five.

By C. Douglas Allen.

When I first arrived on my homestead in 1905 there was no settler within twenty-five miles of me, and the countryside was just as Mother Nature had made it, beautiful, mysterious, austere....and a little menacing to the young city adventurer with a charming lack of experience upon which to found his hopes and fears.

Being entirely alone is as upsetting to the philosophy of the city boy as the first experience of the hum and bustle of a great city is to that of the backwoodsman.

Having been brought up in an atmosphere which demanded the making of conversation whenever "two or three are gathered together", the silence of the first few months almost drove me insane, and many nights, just as I was on the borderland of sleep, I heard the street-car clanging round a corner with startling vividness.

Just as the backwoodsman must become used to the noise and unrest of a city before he can sleep comfortably, I had to lose the fear of silence and loneliness, and it took some time to discover that I had all the best of it. In the course of time our countryman will discover the loneliness of a great city and its roar will become inarticulate or a meaningless jazz of sound, while I grew to understand the secret voices of nature, discovering the miracle of the sun-rise....and out of the silence came a song, of which we may not speak nor tell.

It was plain that the chief inhabitant of this country before my advent, had been the Bison, whose virtual extinction had been so recent that their trails and skeletons quite outweighed the evidence of any living animal, and told "in mournful numbers" of unbelievable herds. They used to roam down the ravines in single file to drink, and the deep grooves they made in the soil are still there, and wherever there was a large stone, the ground around was torn up in the process of rubbing their mangy sides against it. It might almost be said that their bones littered the ground, every settler collecting a few skulls, and many laid out their garden beds with them, a large number of horns being so recent that they glistened beautifully.

A complete skeleton still lies on a bluff on my farm just as it was shot and

skinned, leaving hundreds of pounds of meat to rot or be eaten by wolves, which was the process of extermination dictated by the wisdom and enlightenment of the white man. The antiquity of the Bison (or Buffalo as we call it) is a thing to marvel at, as my personal testimony will prove. While helping a neighbour to dig a well by hand we dug up a fossil tooth at a depth of twenty-five feet below the surface, and as we were probably the first white men to even stand on that exact spot (much less dig there) no question could arise of any mistake. I carefully compared the tooth with one from a recent skull and found it to be exact for size and grooving, which led me to think that evolution had not found any necessity for improvement for some little time.

The Prairie-chickens (Grouse) were very numerous when we came, and quite unused to man, allowing one to walk almost up to them, and I have shot four consecutively as they sat on the branch of a tree, with a .22 rifle. Even if one missed they would not fly if the shot went above them, but their tameness was not proof against the roar of a shot-gun. They constituted our chief meat in the first 5 years and were delicious fried in butter, the breasts only being used, this obliging bird devoting almost all its development to that part of the anatomy.

They have become scarce, due by popular opinion to the introduction of the Hungarian Partridge. It is very rare that anyone shoots one now and I believe this is because we all became very tired of them in the early years, and we have other meat and a town, but they fail to become so plentiful again for some reason. When we would run into a Mother and sixteen chicks in the grass, the chicks would disappear with great suddenness and it was an odd chance if even one was discovered by the most careful search, and the Mother would run away limping, pretending to be unable to fly, in order to entice one away from them.

The Gophers were a great pest to the first settlers as they would eat the growing crop to obtain moisture, felling acres of grain in order merely to suck the juice from the stem. They are a very pretty little creature about the size of a rat, having the actions and cheekiness of a squirrel. For some years we had to poison them in a very business-like manner and the boys took a delight in snaring

them with string as they stick their heads out of their holes in the ground. We very seldom see one now as they learned in time to avoid the ploughed land and stay in the ravines and river-flats. The method of poisoning was to soak grain and mix powdered strychnin with it, putting a little in each hole. If it was not put in the holes the small birds would get it and die. It is very difficult to fool a crow but I have seen many dead crows which came by their fate through eating dead Gophers.

I once had a small dog of no particular breed who would catch them all day and delighted in staking each one for a considerable time, to achieve the desired result. One day he had an insufficient cold and in the middle of his performance the Gopher flew high in the air, falling by chance beside a hole, down which it disappeared a split second ahead of the dogs nose. Watching this episode, I was astounded at the vitality of the little creature, and another page of Nature's great book admonished me to be humble. For a man to equal this, he would have to be attacked viciously by an animal fifty times his size, thrown fifty feet in the air, fall back on the ground, and then, not only have the strength but the presence of mind to take advantage of the thousand to one chance!

Will this slight crime seem small to the city man! What little sound there was, only the trained ear would follow...a silent picture, yet pregnant with life and death to one who loves them all. And yet we poison them!

Yes, I'm afraid the sentimentalist will see a great chance here to air his sophistry. He prefers killing a few million of his brothers in war or starving them in slums. I have a much greater respect for the man who said that the fox enjoys it as much as the hunters. Nature is never sloppy. I have cut down thousands of trees and have wondered if they feel the bite of the axe.

And I am still wondering.

1453 words.

Six.

By C. Douglas Miles.

Charles L. Wilson was the name he chose to give the Land Titles Office in Edmonton when he filed on his homestead about the year 1908, which is perhaps as pretty a name as any other, though he went back on his nationality by adopting it.

He only syated with us a year or two, being unsuited to the life, but he did achieve distinction by getting himself lost every time he left a habitation and it was said that he left a smoky fire in order to find his house when working in the field, but I assume no responsibility for this statement.

One day in the winter of 1909 he walked from his home to our place, a distance of three and one-half miles and after visiting with us, left about four oclock, just as the temperature was making its nightly descent to minus forty, to pass the night with a neighbour one mile away. Very early the next morning I was suddenly awakened and could not think what had disturbed me, though I felt that it must have been something and laid quietly listening. Presently I heard a thud and a scrape which I could not locate but knew that it was against some part of the house, and not being at all anxious to leave my warm bed, decided that it might be some animal and waited to hear if it was repeated. Again came the same thud and scrape and being fully on the alert this time I knew that there was method behind the sound though it seemed an eerie meaningless sort of noise for either man or animal to make in the middle night.

My wife and I were quite alone and as I was always a highly strung individual I leaped from the bed, grabbed a shillelagh on my way through the kitchen and threw open the front door. Standing before me in the dim light cast by the snow was a giant of a man, his face and coat collar covered with thick frost from his frozen breath, motionless and silent. Naturally expecting that anyone would speak, I began to get the creeps and lose control, half raising my bludgeon, when I suddenly recognized the great C.L.Wilson. I yelled CHARLIE, and he awakened with a jump and after some difficulty with the frost around his mouth he gasped out "I'm all in". Helping him into the house was like handling a wooden man and when I placed him in front of a chair and told him to sit down he dropped so hard I thought he and the chair would go through the floor. Making up the fire, putting on the kettle for hot tea, going in to

the bedroom to explain things to my wife and put on some clothes, brought me to the problem of undressing him, with the gruesome prospect of having to care for a frozen man, my former experience as a hospital orderly sparing me none of the horrors.

Poor Charlie was a very frightened man as we all know the finer details of freezing and the fear of small-pox is as nothing to a healthy man compared with the agonising thought that one may be seriously frozen which may result in the loss of all ones extremities in a fantastical method. It is impossible for the Dr to tell how far one is frozen and all he can do is to follow the decay towards the heart, cutting off a new piece of ones leg periodically in the endeavour to save as much as possible.

But it happened that Charlie had a splendid new outfit of clothing composed entirely of wool and duckskin, he was young and strong, and had kept moving, so although he was frozen very painfully entailing the use of much grease for a time, no permanent damage was done, but the strain on his nerve and constitution prevented him from leaving us for a week. He had missed his direction though he had only a mile to go, and had put in twelve solid hours tramping, losing his head at one period and running in panic. He stopped once to light a fire, but two attempts failing to ignite it, he gave up the attempt and hurried on as he had to remove his mitts to light the match and felt his hands freezing. I followed his track the next day and found that he was going to walk right past my house if he had not fallen over a walking plough sticking out of the snow, in which case he would have come to a deep ravine with the next stop being Edmonton around two-hundred miles away. He had been making circles and whenever he came across his own track he followed it under the impression that he was at last going somewhere. Among the many adventures of this man, I will give another performance of outstanding merit with which he delighted the neighbourhood. He and his partner were living together at the time and C.L. suggested that they make a visit which would include a square meal, neither of them having taken any degrees for cooking, but failing to persuade the other, he set out by himself to walk a considerable distance through the deep snow. The next morning his partner awakened in broad daylight to find Charlie sitting on the bed taking off his footwear. Sensing what was about to come from the grin slowly spreading over his pal's face, Charlie commenced with great

volubility to explain the kinds of fools they were to locate or the least they had as where he had been all night the country was so flat as to abide with no bluffs, being the finest of open prairie which could be broken without any delay to clear, not a stick nor stone for miles. Investigation showed that he had been walking round and round a large lake all night and when daylight came he could see the shack. Poor Charlie never was known a trick one off. Yet can say that they were never lost and in fact trouble during the first early years though can imagine that they could not be so foolish now, thinking, that they have acquired a faculty for finding their way about when all that has happened is that they have become familiar with landmarks and the district has been worked out for us with buried wire fences and roads. But as in a grand new country with no outstanding landmarks, trails, fences or neighbours are our advantages over others could not be too noticeable, though our past experience would save us from the error of passing an acute angle four to three.

The fact is that a countryside has to be learned, just as we learned our little piece of street, and we shall not remember it all the first time we see it. Close will not do as we have seen by the antics of our exploring friend, and the first snowfall will take us back as we have forgotten all we learned. The old trailfinders required a sense of direction over vast distances and could read the sun and stars. But this is different from our present problem. A sailor would not be any more likely to find the house on a dull night than the rest of us. There is occasionally a night so black that one cannot go from the house to the stable without bumping into things and unless one has a fence to follow it would be unsafe to try to get to a neighbours.

Of course one could take a lantern in this case. Yes, we had some fun when the other fellow made a mistake so long as no real harm resulted and we were all a little careless and apt to get into trouble, so as we were all more or less guilty we knew exactly how the other fellow felt and the adventure made a story of which we knew and understood every word to the least detail. Wherever we might drive our horses all through a long day it was quite safe to trust them to march straight home after dark though they had never made the journey before and a dog or a cat may be carried as a sack to almost any distance without the least danger of them not returning home with the least possible delay, these feats being accomplished through the use of a sense which no man has or can ever in the least acquire. Our travelling is done entirely by observation and memory and some will learn their way around more quickly than others,

1473

Seven.

By C. Douglas Miles.

Wainwright is a thriving town twenty-five miles West of us, adjacent to the great Buffalo Park in which are contained the Canadian Government's fine herd of American Bison, obtained by the purchase of a few remaining individuals from U.S.A. and having now grown into many thousands, large numbers having been shipped to the northern territories and many killed annually for sale in order to keep them down to the feeding possibilities of the large park. These animals roam the prairie exactly as their ancestors did before the great Armageddon except that they are fed for a few months in winter owing to their pastures being unavoidably restricted by the size of the park and they are dangerous to a man on foot though taking no notice of a car. Years ago I was in Wainwright in connection with my office of J.P. when I discovered that a tremendous circus from U.S.A. being obliged to stop at that point in order to feed the animals, was putting on the show to collect what was possible towards expenses. It was said that they must stop the train and unload to feed, one-hundred-fifty miles being the limit they could travel between stops. We saw to it that our case was completed in time to take in the first act and I and the Sergeant attended this wonderful five ring circus in our official capacity taking the constable along as a sign of good faith. As we walked round to the seats I noticed that most of my neighbours and all the local village people were occupying one panel, and just as we came abreast of them and I was about to sit with friends and leave the Police to finish their patrol, a most beautiful painted lady suddenly grabbed me by the arm, putting her other arm around my shoulder, gazing into my face as though I was the only man on earth. In the first moment of panic I hissed in her ear "for Heavens sake beat it this is my home town", but she only became more affectionate, and I struggled round towards the Sergeant, expecting that he would protect me, but he was engaged in conversation with his back towards me. It was impossible to hit such a gorgeous creature and I could not cry out for help very well, with all my friends and neighbours looking on, a little shocked, but already tittering towards a roar of laughter, but just as I feared that my reputation was ruined forever, she let me go and I made for my seat amid my laughing friends. By this time she was squeezing herself between a courting couple, taking the young

man in her fond embrace, and as we saw his face turn a blood red, it dawned on the crowd that all this was part of the show, being in fact a fair young man dressed very skilfully in womens clothing, with artistic make up and very cleverly acted. After my experience I was of course delighted to see the other fellow made to look ridiculous as this startling turn passed from our ken on its way around the enormous tent.

The skill and daring of the artists was far beyond anything I can find to say without revealing my ignorance, but I will try to describe one very delicate and charming act which filled me with pure delight. The ring was filled with elephants who were in charge of a tiny and dainty little lady arrayed in a large whip and the cutest pair of high heeled shoes, and some quite wonderful evolutions were performed. We noticed that one animal would persistently get out of place and the tiny lady would whip him back with the more important part of her trousseau, finally becoming so cross that she rushed at him with a great show of temper, kicking him wickedly with her dainty shoe, after which the poor elephant kept perfectly in place, but limping painfully in a most heartrending manner for the rest of the turn, bringing tears of anguish to our eyes.

This circus had a whole train of their own in which to travel and it was most interesting to watch the elephants pushing the immense wagons and chariots on to the cars, with their foreheads, when loading up to depart, obeying the word of command when another foots advance would have meant disaster. A circus of this size is an immense business which cannot be any easier to manage and control by having to travel over the whole of North America. Wainwright came into existence a little ahead of the railway and was first called Denwood by the settlers. When a new line is built the technique is CH to choose the most unsuitable site, keep it a secret from the settlers until they have the village half built, when they are allowed to move all they have done to the swamp or sandpile chosen by the powers that be. This method gives work to a large number of people draining the swamps and hauling thousands of tons of good soil so that the townspeople can grow a garden and if the town is successful it is possible to prevent the houses becoming full of sand with every wind or the cellers flooded with every stormthough this desired result is seldom reached. However this method of providing work in an age when the people are not allowed to consume what they produce, is to be preferred, though it is not nearly so efficacious as war.

burned to the ground,
The entire business section of Wainwright, including the railway station and fire-hall, in 1929, during a gale, travelling with such speed that an old friend of mine left his store teeth on the dresser in the hurry of escape from the house. Some cars which were parked in front of the Hotel for the night, were ablaze before the owners could get dressed and move them, which gives an idea of the speed with which our wooden towns vanish when conditions are right and someone applies a match at a strategic point.
A large number of oil wells have been drilled in this neighbourhood and a splendid business was done, milking the settlers of thousands of dollars by selling them shares on the strength of some beautiful bottles of oil brought from U.S.A. Two very able men put the thing across, and later, when the fraud became apparent and the Government kindly briefed a lawyer to defend the poor settlers, when prosecuted for payment of their notes, these fine artists silently vanished to parts unknown. However, things were so ~~so~~ skilfully managed that they were recalled, the Judge deciding in favour of the wild-cat business and the settlers were paying their notes and interest for years.
Being the Sheriff's Officer, it was my duty to seize their crops and forcibly collect this money for which the settler received nothing, thus helping towards the advance of business, robbery, etc:, my part of course being quite a subordinate matter compared with the service rendered by the Judge. Some oil has been produced from the Wainwright field but so far, no real attempt has been made to find out how large the deposit may be, but we are told now (1937) that an extensive development is to be financed, this time the poor settler will not be worth fleecing as things will be in the hands of large concerns and no doubt legitimate business will result. Wainwright has a barracks at which are stationed a Corporal and one constable of the Royal North West Mounted Police whose duty is to police a district, roughly fifty miles square, which they accomplish in a most officient manner and a minimum of physical force. They carry guns but it is a rare occurrence for them to be loaded. I do not mean to imply that Alberta has a more law-abiding population than other places, but the Mounties are educated on a very sensible plan, are generally men of fine character, and everyone knows quite well that every serious breach of the peace will be punished and to disobey or injure a police officer means certain retribution, hundreds of men being available at the shortest notice, with expense no object. Of course a factory population could not be controlled with such few police, but the majority are landowners with us and consequently have a vital interest in law and order, being at all times willing to help the police with necessary information. In a sparsely settled district a stranger will be a marked man until the inhabitants are satisfied as to who he is, where he comes from and what he is here for. This natural curiosity is embarrassing to any but an honest man.

1543

Eight.

By C. Douglas Miles

The Ribstone Creek meanders in great style over the map of Alberta but is in reality quite an eccentric little fellow when one gets to know him, being often bone dry and at other times flooding the adjacent meadows, ~~inna~~ in some places having quite important banks and at others being just a clean cut groove about fifteen feet across.

The Government has maintained many water guages along its course, the records being kept by residents in charge of an engineer and the results have shown that a fine body of water could be saved if required, and the question of the conservation of our run-off will have to be undertaken in earnest very shortly if we are to continue in business.

This creek has fostered the growth of dense patches of willow scrub at intervals along its course and seemed, by many signs still traceable when we came, to have been a favourite camping ground of the Indian in the dear dead days beyond recall, and at a point beside the village of Edgerton, my friend C. Sawyer discovered a veritable factory for making stone arrow-heads and gathered a fine collection of the finished product.

There were small piles of chippings just as the artisan had scattered them at his work a century or so ago and as there is a gravel pit close by which supplies the village with its building sand and concrete it is evident that he found suitable flints for his purpose at this point. Some of the arrow-heads are quite tiny and the workmanship is exquisite, filling us with wonder as we gaze upon such a delicate gem, picturing in our minds the primitive tools of the artist and realizing the many failures and heartburnings which must have lead up to the necessary skill. Among my friends finds I noticed the fragments of a pottery bowl, which we are told was a rare art with the Indian, and there were stone rasps for cleaning the hides of meat before tanning, tomahawks etc: and he formed the opinion that this site must have been used over a long period and one can imagine such a spot having a name such as we give to our towns.

Quite close to this point a boy found a beautifully carved Buffalo, perfect in every detail except that a leg or a horn was broken off (I forget which) the workmanship being worthy of a modern sculptor. It was nearly as big as a mans two fists, made from a hard black stone and might well have been the work of a lifetime, considering the crude tools of the artist. The more modest townsmen were indignantly surprised to suddenly hear that the lucky boy who made this splendid find had been gypped into parting with it for

a mere dollar and I believe it is now reposing in a Roman Catholic museum inOntario.

In 1906 I discovered ~~in~~ a pile of at least fifty Buffalo skulls at the mouth of a ravine running into the Battle river, and as I picked up a broken Hudson's Bay axe in the vicinity, thought this must have been the work of white hunters and trappe r s though I have never been able to imagine why they should pile them up so carefully.

When the open prairie south of here was first settled, it was seen that the vast amount of Buffalo bones which littered the ground would make valuable fertilizer, and some organization arranged to have them collected and hauled to the railway. The settlers gathered them into immense piles ready for hauling to rail-head but the business could not have paid, as it soon fell through and a lot of these minature mountains of bones were left to grace the landscape. I found an old Red River cart lying just as it had collapsed, which I gathered up and took home for a relic, but it has long since disappeared, the innocent promptings of the antiquarian collector sinking under the turmoil of making a living. These first carts of the prairie were made with an axe only and no nails or bolts were used, a ~~pin~~ strip of green-hide being shrunk round the wheel for a tire, lasting a long time on the soft earth of the infrequent trail. During the first pioneer years no-one had any money, we traded work, borrowed and lent---when a child was due a neighbour woman would come along and help, and though we worked hard, we found time to visit and take an interest in our surroundings and do a little philosophising, viewing all things and each other, with wonder and surmise. When civilization overtook us we gradually found the struggle for existence becoming more acute, until now, our lives are entirely consumed with tractors, taxes, promissory notes, gasoline, mortgages, newspapers and the rest of the wonders of progress, so we are all busy and important, having no time for silly things--- spending ourselves in a frenzied scramble for money in order to save our souls alive. And now, in the evening of life, I am wondering what we got for all our toil and sweat, and what we should have lost if we had been unlucky, if we had been out of line with modern progress and left high and dry in a backwater of the modern world--- if we had never owed the banks more than we possessed--- if they had never come to our rescue!

When breaking new land we would sometimes plough up from under the hard sod, a lizard, from six to eight inches long, which had the appearance of being a million years old, and it was some time before it would limber up enough to creep along. I am still wondering if these chaps are a relic of the past or whether they are considered part of

our active fauna. I carefully examined several of them and found that the imprint of the body in the ground, or the "mould" was a lighter colour where the earth came into contact with the body, and there was no sign of any passage leading to or from it, plainly showing that the creature had been in an immovable position for a very long time, having certainly been frozen solid during the past winter. In splitting a frozen green log, a caterpillar the size of a mans little finger was extracted, taken indoors and became sprightly in a short time, passing from thirty below zero to summer heat or from death to life, in a few minutes, which seemed to our curious attention something of a feat to survive. The gophers which come out of their holes in the early spring are sometimes overcome with cold, being unable to return, and are found frozen dead on the snow and when winter comes extra early the ducks will be found with their legs frozen in the ice. The river freezes to the ground in many places during the winter and only the deep holes are left for the fish to crowd into. There are occasional air holes where the water does not freeze (for some reason unknown to me) and these are sometimes crowded with fish which may be grabbed by the hand and thrown on the ice, a sackful being quite easily obtained by this method if one happens along at a lucky time, though these river fish are small and bony. Many farmers are now keeping a fox Mink since fur farming has become general in Northern Alberta, which seems to be the easiest and most paying animal for the amateur to keep. When we first came into the district the small lakes were teeming with fish of fine quality but they are now fished to death. As there are thousands of lakes all over the Province and they were all grossly overpopulated at first, I have wondered why the Indian should have had periods of starvation if he had any means of cutting through the ice in winter, which would be from four to six feet thick. My first initiation as a fisherman was when I and two friends drove to a small nearby lake taking with us the kind of boat which is made by the mile and cut off in suitable lengths. This lake was about three-hundred acres in extent and we circled it twice, using a spoon trolly taking one-hundred-fifty pounds of dressed fish, Pike and Pickerel, from two to five pounds weight, never getting the line fully out before having a fish. It began to blow on our second voyage round and as our free-board was almost nothing, the little waves rolled over into the boat so that we had hardly completed the second circuit when our Queen Mary sank gracefully under us in ten feet of water, giving the two swimmers a merry time saving the cargo and the non-swimmer, what time he was loudly informing us that he had a family. To take a fish straight out of the water and cook it over a camp-fire after pulling a boat for a few hours on ones first fishing trip, is to set gastronomy to music.

1544

Mine

By G. Douglas Miles

The quarter section I had chosen for my homestead proved to have one rather serious fault, having so much bush on it that even to-day there is a good deal which has never been cleared and made into arable land. A homestead consists of one-hundred-sixty acres which is called a quarter section, having a dimension of one-half mile on all sides, a section being a square mile. We were each given a quarter section on payment of ten dollars and fulfilling certain duties and residing on the land for three years, when we were given a title which does not include mines or minerals. When the Canadian Veterans returned from the South African War they were each given scrip which they could place on any half-section of vacant homestead land, and as they could homestead like the rest of humanity in any case, this meant that a returned soldier could settle down on three-quarters of a section or four-hundred-eighty acres. But very few of them were farmers or wanted to be and the scrip was made saleable with some silly jargon about doing the duties by proxy. Most of this scrip was snapped up by the politicians for a mere song and as there was a time limit attached to placing the scrip on land, those who hung on to theirs for a good price but had no facilities for meeting buyers, found the limit overtaking them, which enabled the politicians to gather in the rest for another little ditty and then extend the time limit, thus disposing of the soldiers.

The scrip now became a real business in the hands of brokers, fluctuating in value between $500 and $2000 and a nice business was done until the extention of time began to near its end, after which it would of course become valueless if not placed on land before the last day allowed. So once again the value dropped to the ridiculous and it was gathered in by those in the know, and another extension of time passed the house.

This was the way we played politics in those days, but of course nothing like this could possibly happen in the present day and time. Now, as my homestead was plainly going to take too long to clear if I was to keep up with modern speed, my brother Percy loaned me a thousand dollars (which debt his great heart afterward forgave me) and I purchased a scrip for $800, placing it where I now live, and as I have since bought half Wilsons quarter from the mortgage company, my farm is nicely rounded out to exactly four-hundred acres, after selling my original homestead. Our chief trouble now is that we have been gradually drying up, having had insufficient rain for many years, which

has drained the sub-soil alarmingly and we are hoping that a succession of wet years will soon come and restore unto us O Lord, our beloved country".

In the early years, the last thing we thought of was lack of rain, being always plentifully supplied and even cursing it at times, little thinking how we should come to value it. The rain seems to pass over a dry country and I am convinced that when the worlds air currents decide to bring us a prolonged deluge so that the whole country becomes saturated once more, it will continue to draw rain for years, on the principle of "to him that hath shall be given". Wells that were apparently inexhaustible have become dry and we are continually going deeper for water, many farmers having to sink to three and four-hundred feet, using an engine to pump. I remember that my first well on this place was only eleven feet deep and it watered nearly one-hundred head of stock and in 1906 we got all our water from a little hole beside a slough which has not seen water for many years. One summer day in that first year it became very dark and it was evident that we were in for a big rain, a common occurrence then. Happening to look round, I noticed a heavy black cloud rolling towards me and actually touching the ground. The effect was startling and I was even a little nervous, never having seen such a phenomenon, as I was directly in its path, and I wondered if I should be able to breathe when it engulphed me. It moved sluggishly and there was no suggestion of speed, yet it came on with surprising suddenness so that before I realised that I was in it, the water was streaming down me and I was thoroughly saturated in a moment.

The trees near me began dripping and streaming with water, the ground in its path being left soaked as after a rain, and in a few seconds I was watching it pursuing its ungainly path, the dry twigs and branches all beginning to weep at its approach. The ceiling was extremely low but this cloud (about the size of an immense building) appeared to be on its own, unconnected with the darkness above, and I suppose the whole thing is not uncommon in a wet country, but I have never seen such a thing since. And my diary tells me that this was all the rain we got that day. I moved to this farm in the spring of 1910, having built the house, and put the crop in on the old place before moving. The first thing was to break new land and prepare for a crop the following year, so as a neighbour was beginning his first year on the homestead, we found it convenient to exchange work. We had just got to the clearing with the horses

after dinner when we observed a very angry storm coming from thw West and a similar predicament barging up in great style from the East, with a nice bright, clear sky overhead, surrounded by a dark yellow haze; the whole picture seeming to demand consideration with a view to re-armament for defence purposes only. When the wind began to chivvy things around we decided that it was time to get the horses in the stable and hunt a gas proof cellar ourselves, as the world was looking distinctly unusual, and we had just got to the stable door when the two storms met right overhead. The thunder was terrific and the rain came down in torrents, but the wind was so fierce that the storm seemed to consist of nothing else and I was almost completely bewildered. Turning the horses in loose I shut the stable door and ran for the house, though it could hardly be called running as the wind was behind me and my whole efforts were directed to holding back to keep myself from flying and I feel sure that no progress could have been made against it.

Just as I gained the house and shut the door, the wind opened up another notch and the house racked at least three feet out of the perpendicular, the wind holding it there with a steady but relentless pressure for over ten minutes before veering to the South and easing up. It now began to hail but turned to raining in sheets and rivers, playing directly on the house door, so that the floor was flooded, simply by the rain coming in through the crevice between the door and the sill. We had to mop it with blankets which we squeezed into a bath and when the bath was full, we opened the door and threw it out, hardly holding our own, and as the roof had been damaged by the hail in places, it began to drip on books etc: "and a joyful time was had by all". In just thirty minutes from the time it started it suddenly quit and we walked outside to find a lovely day again, but we soon noticed a big roar in the South and decided it was the storm passing away at first but soon argued that we could not possibly hear the roar of rain or hail so far away, seeing that the sky was cloudless as far as could be seen. However we could not entirely trust our reasoning and went very gingerly away from shelter, feeling that if the roar we heard WAS hail by some freak of nature, our lives would be worth little if caught in it. Becoming more assured, we eventually arrived at a large ravine about a half-mile from the house, discovering that our roar was this coulee which had been dry thirty minutes ago, running ~~ten~~ twenty feet deep and a quarter mile across.

Hay-racks and machinery were blown about pretty badly but no great damage was done, though the channels cut in the ploughed land by the rain remained for some time. It also rained nicely for several days after this before finally clearing up and I notice by my diary that it rained well again in the fall. It is to be hoped that we shall run into some years like this again soon though we can get along without the cyclone.

1678

Ten.

By G. Douglas Miles

When we left Winnipeg with a car-load of settlers effects, bound for Lloydminister on the Canadian Northern Railway (built by Mackenzie and Mann and since taken over by the Canadian Govt:), the line was still in the hands of the construction company, and we travelled at our own risk. The Barr Colonists had settled at Lloydminister a year or so before, trailing from Battleford, and we heard some wonderful stories of the incompetence of that organization before Rev: (now Bishop) Lloyd took charge, but I must (reluctantly) keep to my own tale of woe, as those lurid anecdotes are only hearsay and even the account of the bright genius who bought cows instead of oxen, because they could plow all day and give milk and butter when they were not working, might not be true.

After having travelled at ones own risk, it is good to think upon the rules and regulations and suits for damages which govern railway companies normally. At first we were on the old line and wished they would hurry, but later, when we began to rock like a boat, we were quite content with the slow pace, expecting to run off the line at any moment, though we never did. We could actually feel the train sinking under us in passing over soft spots and found this as alarming and unexpected as an earthquake at first, but the Engineer was rough to a degree, knocking us and the horses off our feet many times and always started up as though his ambition was to show what the old link and pin could withstand. Now a car-load of effects was just right for two men to settle down on a farm each and work together, it being next to impossible for one man to work alone, so of course the company made the regulation that only one man could ride in a car, which meant that the second man had to pay his fare on a passenger train. As only those who were too rich to farm could do this, it followed that we all had two men in the car, the illegal man being hidden under hay or behind machinery when the train stopped. As soon as we got into the wilds the brakeman came along to all the cars asking how many men were in it and of course received the answer "just me". The next morning as we were rolling along with a board nailed across the open door to keep us from being thrown out when the little extra rolling alongs took place, it was bright and sunny and Pat and I sat sunning ourselves when we suddenly saw a head looking at us from the roof of the car and a voice said "I thought you said there was only one in this car". Well, as our native modesty did not suggest any reply to this statement, the head disappeared and we awaited the Policeman.

At the next stop, along came Mr Brakey to "brake" the news that it would cost ten dollars for the extra man and as argument was of no use, the only reply to anything we could think up being "this makes a nice little station to get off at", we were obliged to dig up the money and grease his palm, not knowing whether or no another trainman would be making a similar demand the next day.However, the same crew seemed to be on duty day after day and I should not be surprised if their need for sleep had something to do with our many long stops. The crew had organised this business very well as there were at least one hundred settlers on the train, some cars having two illegal men in them, and we seemed to have got off the cheapest of any, possibly due to my arguments showing a complete knowledge of the situation and they knew they were playing a dangerous game. If we had only had a man among us with the experience I now have, it would have been a simple matter for us to form a trade union among ourselves and refuse in a body to pay anything as we were one hundred to three, or if the Engineer and fireman went in with the crew, it could have been five, and they could have done nothing, any action on their part would have revealed the fact that they were accepting bribes, or at least, demanding them and our evidence would have been overwhelming. After we had all paid we had an indignation meeting at our next long stop and the figures showed that we had been relieved of over $500. As we were in the middle of this belated and futile meeting, along came Mr Brakey and someone bellowed at him "we're going to report you", but our sprightly financier just grinned and shouted back "report away, I just want two more weeks and I'm going to buy the C.N.R." I was first asked for twenty dollars and many paid this amount, but our meeting fizzled out before we had nearly arrived at the total damage. If anyone will analyse this smart piece of business it will be seen that the only thing wrong about it was that the trainmen were operating outside the rules or laws, while money-power, whose only asset is the monopoly of the power to print money, makes its own laws through the agency of paid henchmen, and must be always in the right, but the result is exactly the same. We were six days on this trip, between Winnipeg and Lloydminister, the whole journey being a nightmare and satisfying us for a lifetime with the novelty of travelling at ones own risk. Towards the end of the journey our arrangements for the horses became so badly damaged that we could not proceed without extensive repairs, and we were both all in for lack of sleep, being in trouble so much with the horses down and kicking things to pieces, so I walked back to the caboose to ask the Conductor to cut us out at the next siding and was received with a stony glare. However, just as I was about to leave in despair, a new Brakey who had just joined the train, walked in and discovered that he knew me when I was Train Master's Clerk at Winnipeg for the C.P.R. As soon as the introductions were made and it was established that I was an old railroader----well, the world was mine, and the fulness thereof.

Instead of cutting us out to fix up, to be picked up by the next freight train which might be days ahead, the whole crew came in a body, delaying the train being a mere detail, confiscating planks from other cars and fixing us up so that we stayed put until we reached our destination. Justice is a noble sentiment but honesty compels one to confess that it does feel good to be "one of the boys", and we realise how difficult it is to convince the man who is winning that he is wrong. No-one had any planks to lend so we took them, and they got them back and to the victor belongs the spoils---- but this brave rough sentiment has nothing in common with money-power, which stands over an unarmed world corrupting everyone and everything, wielding its omnipotent power by proxy.

We had got a nice dog from the Pound in Winnipeg before leaving, and when I jumped off at a station to get some bread, he broke his rope and followed me, so I tied him to a mile-post with the remnant and ran on. While I was waiting to be served the whistle tooted and the train started up and I had to sprint to get aboard, forgetting all about the poor dog, but I just had to notify my henchmen, the crew, and the dog was at our destination before we were, having been picked up by the passenger train on instructions from MY crew by wire. Upon arriving at Lloydminister, they had to switch three cars into the siding, including the dining-car of a construction crew, and in doing so the Engineer treated us to a final flourish, sailing into us at such a speed that the horses were thrown on their backs, saving us the trouble of having to take down the planking, and , as so far as could be gathered from his language, smashing every single one of the Cook's dishes. And so ended the first lap of our adventure into the wilds of Alberta, leaving us somewhat bewildered, but we had burned our bridges, so there was nothing else to do but sail on, and on, and on. If we had discovered a gold-mine, our story would be a Saga, instead of these simple tales, which may perhaps read, to any but the kindly disposed, as though a grain of wheat were trying to identify itself, though of course my excuse in writing them is that they represent the life and doings of a very large number of people.

And yet, this single family, during the last thirty years, by farming, breaking for others with a large outfit, threshing, trucking etc: has produced an immense amount of wheat and oats, beef and pork, supplying hundreds of families annually with bread and meat. If money be the measure of success, then have we failed indeed, the income of one movie actor far exceeding that of this whole district combined, to say nothing of honour and glory. But we persist in having a wholesome opinion of our work and ourselves, and we're quite capable of distinguishing between a man and a monkey--- and perhaps God uses another yardstick. Which is more sentimental flap-doodle, as we would sell anything for money an' it be sufficient, being quite up to date with modern ethics, and fully aware that the only sin, in a Pagan world, is poverty.

1453 words

Eleven

By G. Dpuglas Miles

There were still a number of wild Indians arpund when we came but they are an uncommunicative people and one gets acquainted with them mostly by observation, and the person who has to be told everything will gather little meaning from association with them. I use the term "wild" to distinguish them from the reserve Indians who are fast becoming educated (whatever that means) and will soon cease to have the slightest connection with the Noble Army of Martyrs who once lorded it over this fair country.

The Indians we knew were for the most part desperately poor and had long been convinced of their inferiority, being as representative of the old "Braves" as a London slum dweller of some decades ago would be of the old English Yeomen. It was popularly thought that their favourite obsession was pretending that they could not understand the English language but I soon sensed that this was due to their reluctance to talk at all, though we found their ability to deceive and misrepresent quite equal to the white mans, which made me wonder why they should be dying out when their natural gifts seemed to point to success in most lines of modern business. In the winter of 1906-7 which is still famed for its abnormal severity, there was a small settlement of two families encamped in tents in the river flatsand the population would tote their one shot-gun along the river from daylight until dark, but game was scarce and we thought they were mighty hungry at times, though they never appealed for help. I used to meet them when hauling logs and the men would beg tobacco by holding up their pipes and pointing to them but I always told them (perversely) that I would give them a fill if they asked for it, speaking in an even voice without making any sign, and when I would not accept the one word "tabac" and they could see that it was a case of speak or go without, they asked in pretty fair English. I once met two fine looking young squaws riding smart ponies, arrayed in buckskin coats and trousers with fancy trimmings, finished off with a coloured neckerchief, and surely envied them their appearance and evident enjoyment of life-- a careful scrutiny of them and the ponies including the handsome bridles constituting the highest flattery which was amply acknowledged in the most pleasant manner simply by an occult feeling that it was expected and appreciated.

The greatest artist could not have designed a more beautiful costume, so exactly suited to the life and surroundings and I was conscious of an inferiority complex as

I rode beside them, which was not in the least due to my being a young bachelor as I took them for boys and did not find out until later that they were squaws. Half the inferiority of natives is due to dressing them up in our clothing and taking them out of their own environment, to say nothing of conquering them and taking away their means of livlihood. My next door neighbour Mr O. Aasen was one day following a Deer track on his ski when he ran into two Indians following the same animal, and a deal was made to hunt together and share the result. Aasen, (himself a skilled hunter) allowed them to set the pace and conduct the hunt as they were Indians, still to some extent basking in the reflected glory of their great ancestors, and they trailed along for hours with no sight of the quarry, until Aasen was obliged to sit down and eat his sandwiches.

The Indians, who were of course riding and had the advantage, continued with the hunt and in a very short time shot the Deer, which they could have done long ago, only delaying until they had got rid of the white man. Aasen immediately went forward, to discover that he did not share as he was not present at the kill-- as we are no longer allowed to shoot Indians on sight and they were also two to one, this logic prevailed, which shows how far these noble people have advanced from their effete ancestors.

Recognizing that he had been neatly overreached, and being extremely partial to venison, Aasen offered six cartridges for a hind quarter which was accepted and an invitation to come to camp for a feed thrown in, possibly as a salve to his business vanity. While awaiting the meal, Aasen investigated the tents and upon looking in one discovered an old man whom he took to be about one hundred years old and was convinced he had found the original Devil. So when he discovered that the meal consisted of the entrails which the Indians always eat first, he thanked them and departed with his hard-won hind leg, a sadder and wiser man.

In the early days it was not uncommon for a friendly Indian to call at a farm for a visit, sitting in the kitchen looking at things in general and watching the house-wife at work for an hour or two without saying a word, and then quietly departing, sometimes after a feed and often without. I have the idea that the original seldom spoke, their powers of observation being so acute that language was unnecessary except for oratory at ceremonial occasions, and I would bet that the above visitor could give a minute description of everything in the room and had gleaned more information from his visit than any Mother-in Law could with the aid of conversation.

An old housewife who lived in Manitoba about the time I was born told me that these friendly Indians became quite a part of the family life and she always welcomed

a visit, with its atmosphere of easy comfort and goodwill, seeming to feel intimately acquainted with them. At first she would speak and receive a few nods, but soon caught the idea, and the lack of necessity for conversation became the chief attraction and charm, and however busy she might be it was always good to see one come along, while h this was not always the case with a neighbour. It was very plain that this old lady was recalling in all sincerity a quite important part of her twenty years in Manitoba which, though treasured fondly in her memory, consisted mainly of a few pleasant grunts.

Another friend of the early days was tracking a large Deer, never having hunted before, when he suddenly found himself and the Deer staring at each other, not more than fifteen feet apart. They were both so astounded that they simply stood and looked, and my friend told me that he was so overcome with the glory of the sight that he never thought about shooting, and when the Deer finally turned to run and he remembered that he was supposed to be hunting, it seemed too much like sacrilege to shoot and he continued watching the Deer until out of sight, never having enjoyed anything so much in his life. This little picture may perhaps bring home to an imaginative person the futility of trying to become acquainted with a Deer by looking through iron bars, and there is also food for thought that the sentimentalist might consider, upon examination of the facts. Had my friend been an experienced hunter out for meat, the Deer would have had a moment of apprehension followed by instant death, which is a more merciful end than ninety-nine out of a hundred humans can expect and I have no hesitation in surmising that one wild animal behind iron bars suffers a million such deaths in the course of a few years. The Fox no doubt has a lively time when his afternoon arrives but he is a brave little fellow and hopes to the last, and the end comes quickly, which is what most of us hope for, and if he could realize that he might have been one of the thousands behind bars, he would bless the elaborate and costly ritual of his passing. A Society for the Prevention of War would hardly thrive in a world governed and controlled solely by money power, but it might be a braver thing to go after the real Dragon rather than waste ones substance in dilettantism. Cruelty is the worst of abominations, to cause unnecessary suffering is a sin and the sentimentalist is a fine fellow, but I do suggest that it is a bit weak-kneed to pass up the enormities and make a great fuss about little cruelties which are as nothing in a world whose only industry is war, no money being issued for any other purpose.

1552 words

Twelve.

By G.Douglas Miles.

It was a lazy Sunday afternoon in summer, hot, dry and with a blue haziness in the distance and even the trees were drooping as though to tired and hot to study appearances, with the thermometer approaching one-hundred in the shade, if one could find any. It is not easy to keep up the daily grind in such weather and we long for Sunday, promising ourselves to lie in the shade all day, though I have always found that one feels the heat more when idle. But work is such a beastly nuisance so we dont go too deeply into the matter, being content to leave the problem undecided together with the opposite conundrum of whether it is better to work hard or freeze in winter.

Of course this is a dry climate and a period of excessive heat is much less serious than a resident of a damp climate would suppose, though I do not mean to infer that it is any joke when it gets to one-hundred-five in the shade which is the highest I have seen it by my guaranteed thermometer made by Stanley of London. I have a letter from my Brother in which he says that in Australia (a similar climate to ours) he sat writing in comfort and could see the blacksmith working beside his forge across the street, with the thermometer at 120, while in Colombo he was a wet rag from head to foot, having blotting-paper to rest his hand on while writing, though the temperature was just eighty degrees.

This particular Sunday afternoon, I happened to glance lazily out of window and saw a gopher come from under a small granary, sit up and curl his whiskers in the cheekiest manner, displaying no signs of shame or guilt, though he was stealing my grain as brazenly as any gangster. In those days we were doing all we knew to prevent them from taking our crop while it was growing, but to harvest, thresh and haul it home and then have them come into the yard after it, savoured too much of the technique of the grain trade for a mere gopher to be allowed to get away with, so I reached for my .22 rifle and prepared to lodge a protest. But just as I was getting into position to shoot, he darted under the building again, so I called to my wife and asked her to go to the back of the building and kick on the wall, which she did, the gopher coming out on my side as expected, and getting a bullet through him, which is the right and proper thing to do to a burglar.

Unfortunately this is not the end of the story, much as I wish it were.

My wife, after doing her bit in the war, immediately walked round the end of the hut building, arriving in the line of fire at exactly the right moment to recieve the bullet in her toe after it had passed through the gopher and under the building, all of which was news to us when she came hobbling into view, she being the kind which does not holler either before or after she is hurt. Upon arriving at the house, examination showed the bullet in plain sight, so proceeding to sterilize my knife I nerved myself to the painful duty of extracting it, but it soon became apparent that it was too firmly embedded in the bone for any humane method of backwoods surgery.

By a remarkable coincidence a neighbour happened along at this time with one of the first cars in the district, which enabled us to get quickly and easily to town, a distance of fourteen miles, and to submit our problem to the Doctor. After a very slight experiment with a pair of tweezers he told me to go for the nurse as he must use chloroform. This was a bolt from the blue as we expected that it would be a mere bagatelle for him and we saw visions of a large bill at a time when the crop showed signs of burning up and there was also the unexpressed suspicion that he was making work for himself. I suppose he sensed this when he said that if she could stand it he could take it out without chloroform and as she thought she could, he went to work.

After trying a small instrument he got a real tool and pulled until he was red in the face, but with no effect, and as I had stood all I was good for though my wife was still game, I ordered a halt and went for the nurse. It was finally necessary to lay back the flesh and almost hammer the thing out but she was able to journey home in the car after a few hours rest, though it meant many trips to town in a buggy for dressings afterwards. Busy as the Doctor was, he noticed that I was about to faint from the great heat and my nervous condition and told me to go outside and hold my head low down over the balcony rail. A few days after this our little daughter was playing in the buggy and fell out, breaking her collar bone. I had seen plenty of these fixed and strapped it up, I believe in good style, but we thought after that it might not be exactly right and leave a disfigurement so took her to town and had it done again, making an end to our little nest-egg which we were hanging on to in case the crop failed. But we have very little to complain about on the score of medical attendance fees after bringing four children into the world without the expense of a

Doctor so that this item has never loomed large in the cost of living except at the time. One of my sons (Geoffrey) when a little chap, fell in going over the ski jump and came up with his thumb sticking out at right angles to his hand and being just too big to cry, had a most complicated sort of grin on his face. I saw at once what the trouble was and called him to let me see and gave it a sudden pull which he did not expect, luckily putting the joint in place in fine style, and it was really laughable to see his surprised and glad expression as he worked it to and fro. My son Norman was working under a car when the supports gave way and it fell on him, sinking a thin bolt right into his head behind the ear, pinning him to the floor. By the grace of God, a neighbour Mr Charles Knutson, was standing beside the car and being a strong man was just able to lift the heavy car so that Norman could roll from under, seemingly unhurt, though the Doctor was amazed that he was not dead and took splinters of bone from the wound. This boy also had a tractor rear over backwards with him but nipped from under in the split second he had to play with. After the district had become pretty well settled the farmers formed a company together , bought wire and instruments and installed a telephone system over the whole district which functioned remarkably well.

One of the first outstanding instances of its great utility was occasioned by finding the doughty C. L. Wilson lying in his bunk clawing the wall, evidently out of his mind, which we had always suspected would be a short journey for him and I was able to phone the Doctor instead of having to drive fourteen miles. We were fortunate at that time in having a Doctor of outstanding merit, packing the highest Edinburgh degrees, who would never have been in such a potty place as Edgerton but for the fact that he was too patriotic in the matter of Scotch whiskey. When I phoned him on this occasion he happened to be in a facetious humour, so after my long explanation of the trouble I was asked if the chap had any money and upon my replying "not a bean" the Doc told me to tell him to go to hell. As I was somewhat excitedly trying to convince Doc that the man was in bad shape and might die or do something desperate, I was interupted by loud calls of George from the other end and upon becoming silent was asked why an Englishman was like a boil and immediately told that I would not know anyhow, but they would both give one a pain in the neck. However he told me to go up and have another look at him and if he was not better he would come out, though he knew quite well that he would never receive a cent for his work, and then hung up before I could tell him a beauty I had just thought of on the Scotsman. Our friend Wilson was better when I went up and left the district soon after, thus ending a rather inglorious career as a homesteader.

But after all it is not such a bad business if you dont weaken.

1482
WORDS.

Thirteen.

By C. Douglas Miles.

When I decided to homestead, it was evident that I could not exist alone, forty-five miles from town and twenty-five miles from the nearest neighbour, so Pat came along on the understanding that I should finance him until he received his money, which I found out after we had got settled down, he was trying to borrow from his brother.

As the money never matured (which is a habit money has) he decided to stay and we would work together building his log house and breaking land on his farm to the value of his help to me. This was in the spring of 1906 and we got along famously until the spring of 1907, when Pat suddenly decided that things were not going fast enough, and I fancy the fifty below winter during which his nose (or thermometer as he called it) only thawed out at odd times, had something to do with it, so he pulled out, abandoning his homestead and all we had done on it, and the last word I heard of him, he was gold-mining in the Klondyke. Upon arriving at Lloydminster with our car-load of effects, our first thought was to get the horses into a stable and it was quite grotesque to watch them walk with a rolling gait along the street, like a sailor "home from the sea" after being in a box-car, pounding along a rough track for a week.

We next erected our large tent and unloaded our machinery and furniture into it, put the new wagon together, which I am still using after thirty-one years, and loaded it in preparation for the first trip to the homestead. The next morning, as we found the horses in good fettle, it was decided to start as soon as we could get ready and procure food for the journey. It was now that I had a bad moment, realizing for the first time in dead earnest that I had cut myself off from all I was brought up to, aware that I was entering a new life of which I knew nothing, having invested about all my savings and burned my bridges, knowing that a few years must elapse before I knew whether I could make good and only the future might say if I should like the life.

"Comes at times a stillness as of even" ....yes, these moments of fear and misgiving in youth are quite serious, the more so as they are so infrequent, but they soon depart from one in the onward urge and joy cometh in the morning.

We had no small tent so were obliged to unload at night and sleep in the wagon-box, allowing the hobbled horses to feed at large, thereby experiencing longer or shorter periods of exasperation each morning until we found them. Upon arriving at the cattle

River we found that the ice had not all gone out and the water was very high giving us great difficulty in finding a place to ford, finally having to risk the horses' and our own lives, but landed safely in the end. It was necessary to find a survey stake at least once a day in order to keep track of where we were as there was no sign of a trail and this made plenty of work and delay, the mounds being about two feet high, overgrown and maliciously hiding in the most unlikely places. It was still quite cold at night but the days were balmy, except one afternoon when we had a real blizzard of soft snow which made things miserable to a degree. The first green of the foliage, the prairie covered with a carpet of crocuses, the cheerful note of bird life, our keen appetites, discussion of plans, small discoveries, the absence of any trace of the handiwork of man, the thrill of the unknown which would have been lacking if we had had an experienced guide with us, all combined to create an atmosphere of exultation and make this a most joyous journey innocently pitched between a key of boastful pride and trepidation.

The armful of bread and provisions with which we left town seemed to be rather overdoing it to our inexperience but we ran out all too soon and lived the last two days on boiled rolled oats without sugar or milk, from an eighty pound bag we had taken as part of our load to leave at the homestead, but for which lucky chance we should have been in serious trouble, our capacity for surrounding food cooked on a camp fire being an increasing enigma, even to ourselves. After arriving in the vicinity of our land we walked almost a whole day before we found the survey stake of my 160 acres, but this was a very necessary thing as breaking another acre but is a detail to building a house and ploughing up the wrong farm. I was once driving a man and we had difficulty in locating the place we were to go to, so I suggested that we drive over about a mile to where I could see the tent of a new settler and ask him the direction. Mr Man peered across and saw the tent, turned to me and in a disgusted voice exclaimed "to blazes with him, has a bloody Englishman and dont know if he is on the right farm", and fully appreciating his point of view, I did not bother.

After finding the stake we chose a likely looking spot for a house and dumped our load on the grass and it looked a rather pathetic little pile for so much work, but we hoped to speed things up on the next trip as we had made quite twice the necessary distance by having to hunt for stakes and fords and forgetting to make allowance for the

nstein theory that the sun is not always due South. People in books shouldn't do these
ings but when an authors only asset is the literal truth, they must come out, and in
y case, it would be stupid to suppress one foolishness among so many. And the thought
arises, when I look around in my old age and see what all the clever people are doing the
world over with their wars, strikes, mass executions, abdications, unemployment,
starvation in the midst of plenty, pouring twenty thousand tons of rich milk down the
London sewers while babies go without, burning thousands of tons of the finest coffee,
toiling and sweating to produce chaos, that perhaps we simpletons who made for the bush
were wiser than we knew.

Upon arriving back in town we found that it had rained while we were absent and the large tent which we had left so trim and tight had pulled its stakes and had flopped down on all we had in the world except one load which we were not any too sure that we could find again. As it was nearly midnight there was nothing else to do but re-erect it and as our happy home slowly and painfully arose again, we discovered that the lovely sag which we so admired in our second-hand bed was level full with water. Again there was nothing else to be done, so we emptied the water out and went peacefully to sleep. I suffered absolutely no ill effects from this for over twenty years...but who could expect a lad of twenty-five to look so far ahead! But even so, I did have the sense when writing to my dear Mother, to leave this performance out when writing of my truest and joyous deeds, which she wistfully pretended consoled her for the pain of absence.

We were able to straighten our track enormously on the second trip and as the river was quite reasonable, we made very good time, especially as we were learning the tricks of the trade in every direction. But with knowledge came sadness and the joy of journey
that first was never regained until I drove home to my farm three years later with my bride, fresh from home, and new to everything here. Yes, I obtained her under false pretenses, but I honestly thought that my log house, with her in it, would be as fine as any palace, and glory be, if she didn't come to think so , but without letting on too much. So we built a proper house the next year made with real boards!

And we went to church on a stone boat and had seventeen to dinner, four children were born to us without the aid of a Doctor and whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever and the rest were never invented so far as we were concerned. And the years roll by and the children are still healthy and working hard. Well! Its your turn.

Fourteen.

By C. Douglas Niles

When our first winter closed down upon us quite suddenly on November 4th 1906 we had prepared as well as we knew, though we were direly hampered by poverty and inexperience and lack of neighbours from whom we might have got advice. We had laid in provisions and necessary supplies in connection with Spring farming operations which left the firm, with a surprising and alarming lack of ready money, upon which we had now learned to place a value passing the love of women. Deciding that we must keep a little ,cash for emergencies, we thought we could improvise footwear for the winter, which we did by shaping boards and nailing sacking around which was drawn up and tied around the leg with twine and in which we managed to work and keep warm, with the added assistance of four pairs of socks, mostly knitted by my dear Mother whose maternal cars luckily took that form of expression. Perhaps I should explain for the benefit of residents of warm climates, that I mean we had four socks on each foot, the only reason that it was not five being that the fifth would not stretch enough to go on comfortably and that this rig-out was not expected to keep our feet warm, we being well satisfied that they only actually froze on special occasions. Two English neighbours for whom I had selected homesteads had come in during the summer and one of them having built a house of sard turf sods, spent by far the most comfortable winter, in spite of the earth floor, which became as hard as cement, being always a sore point with his good lady. These were the only people we saw from November until May, with the exception of an enforced trip to Lloydminister, occasioned by a sad miscalculation in the matter of tobacco. Pat and I were both heavy smokers even when practicing economy, so that what we thought was an imposing and extravagant quantity of tobacco disappeared before Christmas. We tried smoking tea which made us ill , so switched to the inner bark of the red willow on the strength of reading that the Indians used this for tobacco, but we evidently lacked the secret of its preparation and the gloom of our situation merely thickened. We scraped the inner bark from the black poplar walls of our log house but in spite of these signs and wonders, the heart of Pharoah remained hardened, and having no first-born it became plain that nothing less than a trip of forty-five miles to Lloydminister in fifty below zero weather could atone for our sins. In preparing for this trip through snow anything from three to twenty feet deep, we bent willow sticks over the sleigh-box, covering them

with a torpaulin, which kept the wind off nicely, and by placing a stable lantern at the feet of the driver and covering his knees with a blanket, he was able to keep warm though we had to change off when his hands began to freeze. We had made a set of sleighs out of poplar trees, but having no means of putting iron shoes under the runners, the hind bobs had to guess where the front ones were going, which made our proud schooner pull like a cat by the tail, and we were always in dread of a breakdown, taking tools and wire along for repairs, anticipating the thrills and emotions of the early motorist by a decade. We started at daylight, planning to get to a house we knew of about halfway, but it was already getting dusk when we came upon a little shack we had never heard of, being somewhat off our road owing to having to go where the depth of snow would allow instead of where we should, having only accomplished a distance of ten miles as the crow flies.

It was fifty below and what we should have done if that shack had not been there remains a mystery still as the horses had done a very hard days work in the deep snow and we could not have travelled in the dark and altogether a madder trip was never undertaken. A man and wife were living in the shack and the good lady said that we could not stay as their little stable was full when her husband came back with the two oxen from getting firewood, so we put our horses in the stable and prepared for argument, but the husband coming along soon, was quite pleasant and we managed to squeeze them all into the stable, propping the door shut and hoping for the best. The shack was so small that we slept on the floor between the bed and the cook-stove which was all they had for heat, so I presently awakened to find that I was too cold to sleep, but kept quiet for awhile hoping I could stand it and not disturb others. However, I soon found this to be quite impossible and whispered to Pat, finding that he was doing the same as myself, so we arose and lit the fire, finding that it was only an hour since we had gone to sleep with the dinky little fire-box full up, yet the pail of water from which we had drunk was frozen solid. At minus fifty, to open an outside door is just as though one were pouring a torrent of ice-water into the room, and a little light board shack has nothing solid about it to gradually cool of, being entirely defenceless as soon as the fire goes out.

SAT

We sat up the rest of the night keeping the fire going and dozing, finding all well in the stable next morning and began another bitter days fight with the cold and deep snow.

But the great grief of this lucky oasis was that the man did not smoke and we could not get any tobacco from him, and I rather think that if we had we should have sat up all night in any case in order to smoke, it being beyond imagination to see how we could have gone to sleep with tobacco in the house. The next night we came to the place we hoped to have made the night before but found that the brute of a boy who lived there would not allow us to sleep in the house, which rather took our breath away. However, we were two to one so there was no occasion for argument, and having seen the stable while

while putting the horses away, we decided that it gave the best promise of a nights rest and accepted his ruling without comment, though I was rather badly irked to think this was a fellow countryman who had been brought up amid all the luxuries of modern life except education, there being nothing that he could do which could be of the slightest use to himself or anyone else. He also warned us not to touch a small pile of oat sheaves in the stable, which he had obtained for pure seed, but they looked so ~~f~~ inviting that we could not resist sleeping on them, making a pretty good job of threshing through the night. It was the custom to carry ones food and travellers merely needed the convenience of a place to make tea,and hay for the horses, so as I had stayed at this fellows for dinner during the previous summer, I knew that he was not a smoker and we did not expect any chance of a smoke . The next night we got to town, travelling much faster as we got nearer civilization, coming finally upon a real used trail, and the joy of the smoker was ours, though we were so done up that a few ~~pupin~~ pipes put us to sleep, happy and contented for the first time in weeks. Perhaps this story will sound rather weak and absurd to the moderate smoker who can quit at any time, but never does, and whether things would have been different in civilized surroundings I cannot say, but at this time there was just one comfort in life for us, bed being rather a strenuous business with the blankets frozen to our faces every morning and the sour dough making very sorry pancakes, failing to mature properly in a house that was too cold to sleep in.

Certainly, none of these things are necessary, but the pioneers of that day were different from the ordinary type, having neither experience nor money, being suddenly plunged from the centre of civilization ~~inxx~~ into a frozen wilderness with no qualifications for the position, so we had to either take it on the chin or get out, and as the shipping companies and the railways had collected our fares and we had spent all we had left, it was plainly a matter of indifference to the world which we did. But it so happened dontcherknow, that we were made of that sturdy stuff which is so much admired in poetic prose at a penny a word, we were referred to as Yeomen Farmers while the rush for tickets was on, but now that we have cleared the land and built nice houses, producing hundreds of millions of cattle and billions of bushels of wheat and oats and nearly half the country is on relief, our success is so palpable that there is no occasion to sing it. Now that our fair province is in debt to the tune of nearly two-hundred-million dollars and getting deeper every day, one wonders where all the enormous wealth we produced went to and if there is any way for a people to work without getting into debt. If we look in Whitakers we shall find that the wealthier a country is the deeper in debt it is, so perhaps our trouble may be that we are not sufficiently in debt. But the God of money-power knows.

1912

Fifteen.

By G.Douglas Miles.

In any new and untamed country, the common man has always found it necessary to success, that he be a Jack of all Trades, while on the other hand, civilization always demands specialization; so the Pioneer is one of those, who, especially, in his life plays many parts. We are alà aware of the ruling, "once a Mason, always a Mason", but this does not prevent a man from being something else as well; but the Trades Unions rule that, "once a bricklayer, never anything else but a bricklayer", though I forget just what the penalty is, if a bricklayer is caught doing a spot of plastering or tying a scaffold knot.

But it is evident that this sort of procedure would not be practicable in the backwoods, any more than the five hour day, or complete cessation of work from Saturday noon until Monday morning. It is surely a strange paradox, to find laws preventing a man from working, to see a hundred men after one position, to find columns in the papers asking for work, when we know perfectly well, that man's natural disposition is to avoid all work like the Devil.

At the age of fourteen I was taken from school, and placed in my Father's carpenter shop, because I refused to take anything seriously, apart from the noble game of cricket, and my bicycle; and I still applaud the wisdom of my Parents in taking this action. I learned carpentry, in a shop where everything was done by hand, under a foreman whom I soon learned was an artist, and who did not hesitate to box my ears, or throw things at me when I made a mistake, though I was the Boss's Son. I attended night school, where I studied Building Construction, Accounting, and Chemistry, the last being my own choice of a hobby. In the summer, I had spells of bricklaying, finding this trade come to me quite naturally, and without much effort on my part. A good carpenter has forty times as much to learn as a bricklayer, and it is harder work. Through the years, I did a considerable amount of painting, and even tried my hand at plumbing, gaining at least enough insight to avoid the misconception of the man who, when asked if he could play the fiddle, replied "I dont know, I never tried".

When I was twenty-three my Father developed cancer, and as I was evidently not cut out for a business-man, my interest in all things having still a very boyish quality about it, I decided to follow the wave of emigration to Canada, and become a Farmer bold.

As I knew nothing whatever about farming, this was exactly the thing to appeal

to my eatward fancy at that time, and in order to fit myself for the new life and business, I bought a fine shot-gun, and practised for days on my Uncle's farm. I remember him telling me that when I brought him home the morning Lark, he would say I could shoot, but though my father was a perfect shot, taking all the prizes as a young man, I found that it did not help me at all, and my Lark must have died a natural death.

In my enthusiasm for the new life, I had no intention of taking my carpenters tools along, but my father insisted upon it, saying that if I was a bit irresponsible, I had a trade in my hands, which was something.

As I talked to one and another on the boat, I discovered that farming in Canada meant working from 4 A.M. until 10 P.M. with no intervals, and having a hazy idea that it would be necessary to work a year for a Farmer, before starting on my own, decided there and then that I had another date. My next choice was laying bricks, as I could do this and whistle, or compose poetry (of a sort) without making any mistakes in my work; also the enormous wages paid in Canada for this work enticed me, until I learned that one had to lay from fifteen hundred to two thousand a day. As we had been calling around six hundred a days work in England, I decided that it was impossible, (and it is, if one expects a building that will not fall down) so that was ruled out, and it was a comfort to know that my tools were in the hold.

On arriving in Winnipeg, I found the streets piled nigh with snow, and things looked pretty hopeless in regard to getting work, though it was the first of April, but I found a boarding place, and proceeded to look for work, which I did not obtain for nearly a month.

A rather playful introduction to the ways of Canada, came to me, in this, my first home away from home, when I was awakened in the middle of night, to find the Landlord standing beside my bed, with a smoky lantern and a bloody axe in his hands, calling upon me to get up, adding in a husky voice, that he had just killed the missis.

Rousing some others, I found, upon going downstairs, that it was perfectly true, finding the good lady lying on the couch with her face split neatly down to the chin.

The husband sat quite quietly while one went for the Police, and in a few weeks, died in prison of T.B. before coming to trial, and the verdict of the fifteen young fellows in the house, was, that it served her right, possibly due to the fact that we

had eaten her cooking for a month or so. This man had worked hard all his life as a lumberjack, and no doubt the cold water of the rivers had started the T.B. in him.

Having to give this work up, he started the boarding house for his wife, and got a job driving a team in the city, which he held until he was seen hanging on to a wheel, coughing his heart out, and of course, it was impossible to allow him to continue.

As he was at home for a week or two, unable to get more work, though doing all he could at home, the sweet lady saw fit to jeer at him in front of us all, saying that he was living on her, so we naturally agreed that it was about right to slap her wrist.

The following year, my younger Brother came to Winnipeg, with his 'Cello and was soon making a fine salary, but as this entailed my playing the Viola and singing until all hours of the night, it became too painful to get to work at seven in the morning.

On one occasion, I arose, ate my breakfast, spoke to the others, but did not become conscious until I was on the street-car on my way to work, and I still distinctly remember the wonder of the thing slowly dawning on me. I tried to think whether I had had any breakfast, and endeavoured to feel hungry, but upon returning at night, it was only possible from the joking talk, to be sure that no-one had noticed anything unusual.

As a friend was giving up his position of Trainmaster's Clerk on the C.P.R. I decided to give up carpentry and take his position, and having a month to prepare myself, I sat down for eight hours a day, learning Pitman's shorthand and typewriting well enough to hold the position until I left for the Homestead. Of course, I was coached by my friend and only learned what was required in that office, concentrating upon railway terms and titles, and I had learned it at school, though I remembered nothing of that.

This enabled me to sit up at night as I was not due in the office until 9 A.M. and I was also able to play viola in the theatre orchestra and at dances.

The first winter I was in Winnipeg, although I could have gone on working at my trade until nearly Xmas, I decided that twenty below zero felt a bit draughty, and as I had a second-class certificate for Chemistry, I applied for a position in the Winnipeg General Hospital, hoping to get into the dispensary. Being offered a job as Theatre Orderly, I decided that it sounded warm and comfy, so collected up my tools, putting them in a safe place for a rainy day, and reported for work.

We had twelve to fourteen operations a day, with an odd one on Sunday for good

measure. This proved to be rather a strenuous business for me, and though I became quite used to seeing people cut up, and would walk down to the furnace with a man's leg under my arm, eating an apple, I found that I was gradually becoming morbid. The Dressing-room Orderly, kindly initiated me into the charms of touching the tongue to a tiny bottle of chloroform all day, so in the early summer of the next year, I resigned and returned to my carpentry while I was safe, though I almost left it too late, returning twice to replenish my bottle, without success, as I was mercifully, watched too closely.

While working for the C.P.R. I began selling real-estate, and being bright and talkative, knowing so many hundreds of people, I found I had dropped into a gold-mine, making more money than I had dreamed possible, the boom being at its height then.

However, once again, I was obliged to get out while I was safe, and if the natural inference is that I was one of those pleasant people who cannot stand prosperity, I most certainly discovered the right medicine when I came homesteading. At least, I have found that the pursuit of wealth requires some stern qualities which I have never cultivated, and comparative poverty has enriched my ego, though I confess to an innocent desire to test if the cure is complete.

The purchase of a car-load of horses and machinery, left me hardly enough to navigate with, out of all my ill-gotten gains, but I feel that I saved my soul alive, even if it proved at times, to be a rather painful process.

One Fall, when the crop had failed, and things were decidedly groggy, I bethought me that I had fooled a bit with tuning pianos in my youth, so I got the tools and went to Saskatchewan, where the crop was good and the people had money. I made the acquaintance of several ancient pianos, which it was impossible to tune, but I cleaned out the dust, hairpins, and even coins, abandoned all attempt to tune by vibrations, satisfying the farmer's wife with the improvement, and telling her honestly that it would not stay in tune, I made a nice sum which kept us chewing and bought the seed for next year. Of course I had many quite nice pianos, but it seemed strange to find people who thought a piano which was painfully out of tune, sounded "quite nice", though they sang in tune.

I drove a taxi when cars were scarce and collectors numerous, and I still sell insurance , if you want any. Being the Sheriff's Officer and J.P. for this district, about sums things up, so, making a typical Canadian "Jack of all Trades".

1508 words

SIXTEEN

by C. Douglas Allen.

On Christmas Day 1906, rat and I walked to the river flat to cut a fine lot of logs we had discovered a few days before, thinking that as we had no way of observing the festival, but to sit indoors with our hats and coats on, we might as well be doing something useful.. There was no wind in the woods and during the day it became quite pleasant to work, a little snow falling and melting on our clothes, so we went after the logs in great style, felling and trimming one-hundred-four, averaging twelve inches in diameter. As dusk approached we decided to call it a day, especially as we had worked very hard and it began to show signs of reverting to minus fifty, with which figure we had already become unpleasantly acquainted. On reaching the open flat we discovered that a vicious breeze was a really desperate going to face, freezing our damp clothes so that they creaked as we walked, slowing us considerably in the deep loose snow. By the time we reached the up grade of the river bank we were both seriously tired and cold, and rat suggested that we sit down for a rest, but I persuaded him to keep going judging that we were too cold for safety. However, half-way up the hill, rat sat down in a very determined manner saying that he was going to rest if he did freeze, and I kept going as I was fully persuaded that we had got into quite serious trouble, my legs being already so stiff from cold that I was having difficulty in walking and I was afraid that if I sat down I should not be able to rise again.

Rat was a bigger and stronger man than I but I could travel with him to a finish under normal conditions, but this was a case of who could stand the most cold and not a test of ordinary endurance, so sticking my axe in the snow and hanging my coat on it, I went forward with only one object, to get home out of that cruel thirty-below wind before the slowly increasing stiffness brought my progress to nothing, and I knew now that I should be lucky if I made it. Here is where a good jolt of spirits would have taken us home in good style, though it is well to know that unless one reaches shelter before the effect wears off, it means complete collapse when the reaction sets in.

I plugged along, going more slowly all the time, so that an observer in a comfortable position would have thought I was drunk or the laziest man ever created, until I

could see the bluff the house was in, but as there was a haystack nearer to me and I was so near my limit, I decided to make for that and dig my way in out of the wind, to rest and recover. But just as I got into the deeper snow I fell, and was immediately suffused with a warm heavenly feeling that is impossible to describe, though I have read of the heaven of the opium-eater, and in all truth, I was very near to the Angels at that moment. Suddenly, I got up and made for the house like a demented man, the action being quite involuntary, as I was unconscious of any decision to do so, and I remembered after, a feeling that I was watching myself do things.

Arriving at the door, I could not turn the handle as my fingers would not close round it, and the idea did not occur to me to throw my weight against it and break in, which would have been quite easy, so I slid slowly to the ground, still feebly protesting somewhere in the enormous cavern which my mind had become, passing into that calm and peaceful sleep which knows no awakening. I was never painfully worried because at first I had no doubt that I should get home, and as the situation became more and more serious my thinking became more dreamlike and the actual freezing was automatic and not to be compared with many a walk I have made with a sore heel, for discomfort. Oh Death, where is thy sting?

In what must have been a very short time, Pat came staggering along and just managed to open the door after much trying, he too not thinking to fall against it, (to raise ones foot to kick was impossible) and when he awakened me by some means, I crawled on all fours, managing to get on the bed where I lay in comfort, very much afraid now, but with no desire to sleep again. Pat flopped into a chair and there we were. I was beyond doing anything, but luckily Pat soon recovered and made a fire, shut the wide open door, and as the place became warm the life came back into us, so that Pat was soon his own man again, taking off his frozen footwear and fixing up generally.

He then turned his attention to me, finding that my socks were frozen to the flesh almost to the top, and to make a long story short, we thawed out in water and found that apart from one little toe I had suffered no permanent damage and Pat was never in any serious trouble, the rest seeming to be the right medicine for him.

And now it was time to get our porridge and sour dough working, but we were

both pretty listless still when I had a thought that I had brought a bottle of gin with me which had been hidden snugly away and almost forgotten, as I meant it for medicine only. Thinking that this was an occasion which called for drastic measures, I told Pat about it and found the motion seconded and carried, a bar-tender appointed and a full cup of neat gin in my hand while I was still wondering if we might not be wiser to save it now that we were safe. Neither of us had tasted liquor for nearly a year, but a half-pint of neat gin simply restored us to normal, so we cooked supper, made the fire red hot and forgot our poor aching feet, our pipes tasting like nectar. I soon noticed Pat looking at the half empty bottle and when he suggested that it was useless to save a little drop like that, I fell in with the idea and we finished it on the principle that if a little was good, more would be better.

I was busy relaxing in that happy position which a table full of unwashed dishes brings to conscious laziness, when suddenly Pat began a war dance which entirely scared the comfortable feeling out of me. It was my place and the responsibility was mine, Pat was a very Hercules of a man, and he was drunk, the gin having more effect on him as he was not so exhausted as I had been. So I began to talk to him like a father, trying to get him to accompany me to the stable to attend to the horses, thinking that if he got out in the cold he would soon recover. He informed me in solemn tones that HE would attend to the horses and I could wash my dam dishes. I watched him go to the stable and take the horses round to the well, which greatly relieved me and I proceeded to wash my first quality ironstone chinaware.
After awhile I realized that he had not returned and becoming more and more anxious I finally went to look for him but could see neither him nor the horses. Here was a mess. I soon found the horses pawing the snow but they were alone and my yells brought no response from Pat so I thought I would go to the well to see if he had ever been there, and perhaps I could track him from there as it was such deep snow. After the comfort we had so lately enjoyed I was suffering tortures in my mind now, knowing that if I found him far away I could not possibly carry two-hundred pounds if he proved to be helpless, the cold was intense though the wind had gone down, I could only hobble with my poor feet and the end of the world had surely arrived this time.

And there, lying on his face, looking down the well, was Pat. When I kicked him he held back his hand to me, saying "hush", "theres a man down here and every time I call to him, he answers back". Well, I persuaded him to come home as the cold was sobering him rapidly, we put the horses in the stable and fed them, grabbed an armful of firewood and went to bed. So ended a perfect Xmas Day.

1206.

Seventeen

By G. Douglas Miles

The beauty of this country must have been absolutely enthralling before the advent of the white man and was almost in its primitive state when I settled here.

Perhaps mankind achieved the ideal existence in Canada, our northern Indians having a bracing climate, a beautiful country and life being difficult enough to render them efficient and strong. The first whites who came into contact with them were not appreciate the type to beauty and art, yet we have many accounts of their fine qualities, oratory and dignity, with complete accord upon their innocent and friendly welcome of the white strangers. When I first arrived the countryside had not been turned over, as evidenced by trees over one hundred years old, and the wild flowers were nothing less than a miracle, though to-day one must hunt for them. Even before the snow was all gone the crocus would blaze forth, a vivid blue-mauve, so that one literally walked and drove over a carpet of flowers. Sometimes the wild -roses would come early and it was as though the whole district had been set out in beds, the blooms being large, shading from pink to dark red, giving off at certain times a universal perfume.

The Tiger-lilies were gorgeous and plentiful while patches of Fireweed, Indian's Paint Brush, False Mallow, Anemonies, Harebells etc: demanded attention, with Violets Michaelmass Daisies, Lilies of the Valley, and literally hundreds more filled every dell and crevise with constant surprise. When the wild fruits, Saskatoons, Choke and Pin Cherries, Raspberries, Cranberries, Strawberries, were in bloom it was as though the countryside had decked itself for a wedding, and at first the Raspberries were so plentiful that we could fill all our pails in a few hours, the quantity being unlimited and the quality as good as any produced in Kent. The birds were beyond anything I had ever dreamed of for numbers and as they go in for gay plumage here, they made a wonderful sight, and though they are not up to the old country for musical qualities, their cheerful twittering with an occasional rich phrase made altogether a glorious accompaniment to the daily round. It is still possible to enjoy the flowers and the birds, but one must go to find them now instead of having them for a carpet and stealing ones crumbs round the camp-fire.

One can imagine the Indian, with his perfect health, freedom, and small needs, knowing such a Paradise, with abundance of food clothing and shelter, all as certain and enduring as the everlasting hills, with no artificial money-power to prevent him eating the fish he caught or the meat he hunted. Unlike the South-Sea people, the Indian must have been mentally and morally strong, having to hunt and work for a living, to withstand "winter and rough weather", highly skilled in making tools, weapons and canoes, and using them with great skill, courage and discomfort. The Indian women were as strong as the men and having to do the camp work, make the clothing etc while the men hunted, they really had a more equal position and if the men were a bit lordly sometimes...well, this is the West, where the men are men, but smell like sheep, and at least they never went to court to force a man to keep them.

This picture will not appeal to the dainty lady but there is no background of hospital wards, tuberculosis, indigestion, chloroform and a few other amenities of civilization I might mention.

To tame and ride their wild horses, shoot the dangerous rapids of the angry rivers, hunt, fish, with an occasional friendly fight between tribes, must have given a zest to life and provided thrills and satisfaction, which we are supposed to get from watching a football match or looking at a picture of other people doing things, just as we read about life in general. When I think of our poison-gas warfare, our diseases, the fearful tragedies of our thousands of hospitals, millions of men walking the streets in hopeless idleness...when I see that our only industry is war, I am forced to conclude that our science and maudlin art are serving mainly a devilish purpose, and if life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness be the test, the old Indian had the best of things. I have seen this district turned from a Paradise where a few could and did live God's perfect life, into a near wilderness where hundreds live in poverty and mental stagnation, the breath-taking beauty of the countryside being replaced with barbed wire fences. But things like this you know must be if we are to be in a position to send our quota when it is decided to kill ten-million men.

When the conquorers came with modern arms, relentlessly taking more and more of their country, it is natural that the Indian resented it and it is difficult to imagine what else he could have done but fight for his home and country. He did not

4

want the new way of life any more than a retired person would want to live as a slaughter-house, and was so strong that he preferred to die out rather than imitate and accept a lower form of existence. The Indian was exterminated with the Bison ; a very unfortunate piece of luck, in order that most of us could place a mortgage on his land at eight per cent. During the last sixty years we have cut down all the forests, fished out most of the lakes, ruined the land until it was blown away and become a desert of all the woods in the world, we have fenced the prairies with shack towns and instituted a system of education which ensures that the next generation will know all about Greek verbs and a few other equally innocuous matters connected with self-government. In all we have, that great land has wanted and had made no progress for hundreds of years but such is the wonderful power of civilisation that we have already exploited hundreds of thousands of acres in the west, moved the population from the destroyed lands to where they can continue their fine and brave work of pioneering, leaving behind them a country which may support rabbits and so produce fine coyote fur, which can be sold for real money.

Though we have seen the few present day Indians a sorry sight, they compare quite well with our own conquered workers and wherever one is given the opportunity to live like a human being, he develops into a fine man, just as our own people do.

But when we picture to ourselves the old time Indian, decked out in his buckskin and beads, crowned with eagle feathers, monarch of all he surveys, alert, efficient, strong, virile, manly, with dreams and poetry and music surrounding him, we must acknowledge that his creation was greater than our civilisation can, or admit that we have erred and strayed from Thy ways, Indeed. All things come from Thee O God, and of Thine own have we given Thee. But this refers to money and is sung before the collection, we remember.

1708.

Eighteen.

By G. Douglas Miles.

Some wise man once said, that "Courage consists in having done the thing before", a statement so deep and true, that at first glance we take it for a pleasantry.

Most of us are born neutral, and no man is suddenly a rogue, nor is he ever a spontaneous Hero, though we may easily do something spectacular in either direction.

At first we regard taking dope with horror, but a very short acquaintance will bring toleration, and quickly ripen into all absorbing embracement. We have come to accept ten million casualties on the roads of U.S.A per annum, as a normal incident of life, and because no Government of any country is allowed to have any money except for war, we have come to accept the fact that next week our loved ones may be writhing in the agonising death from poison gas, and our great Temples may be falling about our heads, as a normal condition of life. Or have we any loved ones?, or do we think?.

If we do away with soldiers and munition makers, then ~~thaxx~~ the rest of us have no occupation, our only mission in life being to supply them with food and material.

Is all this because we are such a brave people!---or are we unthinking fools?.

To find a satisfactory definition for bravery, is far from an easy problem. It seems hardly fair to shoot a soldier for cowardice, when with the best will in the world his legs fail to carry him forward; many a great sea Captain is sick in a storm to the end of his life, yet it would be rather absurd to dub him a landlubber.

The Coyote (pronounced Kiute in America) is an animal which has been greatly slandered, being generally referred to as a cowardly animal, by those who do not know him, or understand the meaning of the term. I have no intimate acquaintance with a Lion, but if he rushes bravely at a man with a high-power rifle, it would seem that he could learn a lot from the Coyote, and still be brave.

The Lion kills Deer, who cannot fight back, just as the Coyote kills Rabbits, so they would appear to be even on that score. It has been know for one well trained and larger Hound to kill a Coyote, but those who hunt with Hounds, will not allow one alone to attack a Coyote, as only the best would have a chance, and would be sure to suffer injury.

If the man who describes the Coyote as a coward, was turned loose on the prairie, knowing that one hundred men with rifles were aching for a chance to shoot him, it would

be interesting to observe whether he regarded it as bad form, to keep out of their way as long as possible. If it is necessary in order to qualify as a hero, to welcome an unfair fight with joy, just for the fun of getting oneself killed with certainty, then I have another definition of the word, for private use.

A neighbour who lived here for many years, and who hunted Coyotes, left to reside in Australia, some years ago, and after establishing himself in that country, wrote me that the Australian Dingo is the exact counterpart of our Coyote. He also informed me that his wife, who was born in Manitoba, coming to this neighbourhood as a child, would not entertain the idea of returning to Canada. But then, as I says, theres always something

Yes, the Coyote has to touch his hat to the man with a gun, behaving in the same craven manner as a farmer does, when he enters the Bank sweat-box, but I know that a Coyote will fight skillfully and fiercely, to the last gasp, and never cease to do the wisest thing, while a speck of life remains.

In spite of their fur being valuable, so that no-one ever misses a chance to kill one, the Coyote is the only revenue producing wild animal, which has held its own against man, being just as plentiful as ever. The Coyote follows the Rabbits, which have a habit of disappearing from a district, (due to a peridoc disease, which almost wipes them out) but let the Rabbits return, and Mr Coyote will be found back at his old stand, matching wits with man, not the least bit intimidated, even taking the hens out of the yard in broad daylight.

One of my first startling experiences, was when camped out, hearing, for the first time, their demoniacal and bewildering yell, which is more fearsome to a greenhorn, because a few sound like a hundred, and having some ventriloquial quality, it often quite impossible to tell from whence their insane gibberish comes. Though o good distance away, the noise may seem right beside one, and from a silence which can be felt, the night is instantly charged with a tearing, insane fury, at express speed, loud enough to awaken the dead. And the intelligent reader will be no more prepared for his first encounter, than the man who really thinks he sees a ghost, of which he has read from childhood.

I admire the Coyote, because he is so typical of humanity. When we consider the omnipotent power of the few men whose word is law, in regard to the issuing and calling in of credit, which is the very life-blood of every department of human endeavour,

it is to marvel, that we all go about our business, producing great works, even loving one another, and caring for the sick, when we know all the while, that the mere whim of an insane power, which knows nothing but kill, kill, kill, may lay all we have wrought in the dust, with the hot breath of financial manipulation. We are allowed to spend billions on armament, though the present generation of Midland Englishmen are stunted, because they have never had proper food since they were born.

Perhaps the farmer's claim to courage, lies in the ability to fail, without losing the courage to try again. To have a fine crop, almost ready to harvest, and to watch the hail tearing it up by the roots; to see the thermometer descend to the freezing point, to run in and out with a flashlight, hoping, fearing, and finally, to retire, and try to sleep with the knowledge that the crop is ruined; or to live day after day, and week after week, through a drought, to see clouds form and disappear, to watch the dead white patches increase, and finally realize that it is too late to save even the seed for next year...and in a few days, when it can do no good, the rain descends in torrents... ... yes, the hair turns grey, though we seem to forget all about it, in planning for a new crop, telling our friends that we can stand it, but admitting that we shall need a crop next year pretty badly. But we can take it, and the sneers, until we are in the money again, for these gallant neighbours of mine, (and the Coyote) have a heart which hearts cannot be broken, while life remains.

A neighbour who farmed in Manitoba in 1885, told me that they had harvested a very fine crop one year, and while it was in the stook, a big wind blew it clean away, a few going round with racks the next day, but finding only a few straws and some binder twine. I remember harvesting a crop of No 1, and while it was in the stook, a drizzle began in the afternoon, soaking the sheaves to the centre. By the next morning, it had cleared up, with a very low temperature, freezing the wheat, and taking away all the profit for that years work.

In 1936 the harvest was abnormally early, owing to a partial drought, the crop being in stook, while it was yet high summer, with long warm days; and as usual, the rain came when it was too late for a good crop, giving us an anxious time, watching the sheaves grow to the ground, though we finally escaped having the grain sprout by a small margin, sprouted wheat being entirely worthless.

Wheat is subject to a good many diseases, and in this part of the world, a prolonged drought will bring the grasshoppers; in dry years, the weeds increase, owing to the fact that they cannot grow at a time when it is possible to kill them by cultivation, and yet, in the face of these natural difficulties, we have been selling wheat for many years, below the cost of production, wearing out our machinery and land, in order to obtain a small profit over the actual outlay, so that we can continue to live. The irony of the thing is that I have never grown such large crops, as during these years of depression, but when one is selling below cost, the expenses cover the price, and nothing is accomplished.

Well, this seems to be the dark side of the picture, though of course, the whole world is telling a similar story, and perhaps the conquered countries have a little the best of it. Perhaps it might be as well to lose the next little war, just to see what the difference is.

This seems to be particularly a land of contrasts. One year we would scorn to call the King our Uncle, and the next year, we come to wondering if a building has fallen on us. In a good year, we go to town for a man, and he tells us to bring our farm in, and he'll have a look at it, while, next year he comes around offering to work for his keep.

Blessed is that man who has a good crop in a poor year, for the earth is his, and the fullness thereof. Yet, such is the optimism of the average farmer, that he will spend his crop, while it is still growing, if he can get credit, possibly on the theory that we are always so near catastrophy, that another little drink wouldn't do us any harm.

1779

Nineteen.

By G. Douglas Miles.

During the winter of 1906-7 the thermometer persistently dropped to minus fifty every night through January and February and there was very little improvement in March. The papers gave the mean temperature for January as being minus thirty and at the end of March it was still deathly cold with the water-pail freezing indoors while we were away all day. As night approached it would become deathly still, the frost began to visibly creep up the door and the silence became intense, making for us, a very serious and awesome Angelus. We had built a log house which was too large to heat properly in its unfinished state so that we spent the whole winter in our outdoor clothing, with the little we took off at night being piled on the bed, so that turning over was a matter for long consideration. We had a large box heater and a cook-stove and unlimited firewood, but no matter what we did, we seldom got comfortably warm, and as I slept on in spite of the cold it was indeed lucky for me that it went the other way with Pat who arose and filled up the fires when he could stand it no longer. To get out of bed in the morning it was first necessary to work the frozen blankets away from our faces where our breath had frozen and although we slept in most of our clothes, it was necessary to don the rest before turning our attention to making up the fires, even to putting our mitts on. The chief mistake which caused us so much misery was with the roof, which was made by splitting rails and pegging them on side by side like boards, then covering them with a layer of hay and covering the whole with turf sods. This should have had a coating of earth before placing on the sods, and for lack of which the roof proved porous, allowing the heat to escape, though there were other faults in construction, my training as a carpenter being of no use in work and conditions so foreign to anything I had ever known.

And now that we have warm houses, a lifetimes experience and every convenience, fifty below zero is still a serious matter and a little frightening, as it is necessary to keep the fires going full blast and one goes to sleep with the knowledge that in spite of every care, houses do burn down occasionally, and the chance of getting to a neighbours in such a temperature would be a slim one indeed. The stable would be ones only refuge and unless that was well filled with animals it would be a cold comfort and probably result in pneumonia. Our dog sleeps outside the year round and is never allowed indoors as this would make him soft and no dog could stand being turned out of a warm room into below zero

without freezing, and he has a wonderful coat, keeping healthy and full of beans.

Before we knew this we kept them indoors with the result that they were unhappy and sickly, being too soft to enjoy their run with the team on cold days. Our present dog will condescend to go to the hay-stack if it is really cold, but for the most of the winter he sleeps on the snow and can hear the sleigh bells when my son Jim is returning from a dance in the early hours in time to meet him a mile from home. No cat can stand being outdoors through the winter and are something of a nuisance, it being necessary to have a convenience for them in the basement----one cat we had was born in the fall and having spent all her life so far, indoors, had the consummate cheek to come in from outdoors in the spring, and ask to be let down the cellar. Well, in spite of the weather, we made a trip to the river every day for logs, and as the wind seemed to blow whenever the temperature rose above minus forty, our trail was filled every day, building itself to six feet above the ground, or a little higher than the surrounding snow, making lots of trouble as the track was narrow and the horses would crowd each other in fear of falling off, and we spent some maddening hours when the sleigh, logs and horses would all plunge into the deep snow and have to be got on the trail again by some means. And though our bob-sleighs were rather an ingenius piece of work, being made of wood and wire, the heavy loads proved more than could be expected from soft Poplar wood.

The floor of our house was also made of split rails, proving a rather splintery sort of business to sweep, but we always kept tidy and only in the busiest times did we resort to the fashion of turning our plates upside down until the next meal instead of washing up. Having no brick chimney the metal stove-pipe had to pass through the roof composed of logs and hay, and as it would get red hot near the stove on a windy day and the half-dry wood left a deposit of creosote inside the pipe which would burn when conditions were right, we were always anxious about fire, though we kept the pipes clean, but one could not always be taking them down. A neighbour had his house burn down a few years later and though he had a warm sod barn in which the family finished the night, it was a cold uncomfortable business and would have been a disaster if they had not been able to save most of their bedding, leaving more valuable things to burn. When people have properly built houses with a furnace in the basement and everything fixed according to their hearts desire, it is not easy to realize the danger in which a pioneer must live.

Roughly speaking, all that anyone possesses is contained in the house, either of intrinsic or sentimental value, but the townsman has his job and his income and can make temporary arrangements. The small settler with no money or income has a terrible time getting re-established, every pot and kettle being obtained by selling butter and eggs

which they need themselves or an odd days work, and the house has to be rebuilt with his own hands. Of course the neighbours help a little in such a case, but where everyone is poor, the best having only half the things they need themselves, it is not possible to do much beyond helping to rebuild, everyone giving work freely. Of course it must be understood that the poverty of the early settler was quite different from that of the city poor. We took it as part of our battle and not for one moment did we accept it as our permanent fate----we were always hopeful and happy and the idea of self-pity (which is the end of all things) never even entered our minds, and as I visualize my surroundings I see, in spite of years of financial depression and por prices, the very great majority of the poor settlers of whom I write, with good houses and all the comforts of modern science, including the latest thing in chiffon, to say nothing of rayon, or perhaps I mean radio. But honesty compels me to admit that we have been lucky and in many districts the same hard work and self-denial has met with disaster instead of reward. This record winter of 1906-7 was the coldest, with the most snow I have yet seen, but the winter of 1919-20 was the longest, begining with a blizzard on the eighth of October, and there was still snow at the begining of May, which made almost seven months that the ground was covered with snow. One night during our first winter 1906-7 we went to bed with the thermometer at minus fifty and during the night I awoke and found it raining, though when we arose it was minus fifty. I should have thought myself that I had dreamed this but for the frozen rain on the side of the building which plainly proved that I had not been mistaken. This was due to a chinook wind which are more common farther south than here and may last an hour or two or a few days . It remained cold this winter until the end of April and on the 15th of May there was still an odd little patch of snow on the land as I worked, and I remember what a thrill I got and how smart it felt to walk on bare ground in boots after such a long time ploughing in snow with our grotesque footwear. Nature made one grave mistake in this country by allowing evaporation to have too free a hand in things so that the small amount of moisture we get is soon dissipated and the snow does us very little good. The immense amount of snow we had this record winter all evaporated as fast as it slowly thawed so that not even a puddle of water was left. Once in awhile we get a quick thaw which fills the sloughs and lakes, but at this time the country has become so dry that it will take something exceptional to restore the original moisture---more than seems possible.

Of course the winters are not all so long, it must be remembered, and as I sit writing now, March 6th 1937 I can look out of window and see the bare fields, being a beautiful warm day with just the last of the snow-drifts disappearing, though once again, very little moisture has resulted from the winters snow. As we finished up very dry last fall with no sub-soil moisture, we must depend upon the June rains for a crop this year.

2000

Twenty.

By G. Douglas Miles

The Battle River must be about the same length as the Thames and is one of those rivers which seem to have become bewildered in some glacial period, having to be constantly corrected in its direction by the guiding hand of gravitation.
It has quite important banks, the valley being a mile across and three-hundred feet deep, but when we come to the river itself, we find a modest stream barely one-hundred feet across. When the railway came, Edgerton was eighteen miles from the settlers on the North sidewith Lloydminister thirty-five miles, so the farmers would naturally haul their grain to Edgerton. But it was now that this modest little river presented a problem of the first magnitude and as we hardly realized that there was such a thing as a Government, having almost no taxes nor any schools or municipalities, it was a case of solving it amomg ourselves. This was done by all getting together, cutting and hauling big logs and building a crude but substantial bridge, which entailed a tremendous amount of work, but carried the crop safely over during the Fall and Winter. The round trip to Edgerton with a load of wheat could be made with horses in one day, though about three trips a week was plenty, while the journey to Lloydminister meant staying over night and this again meant expense, so it is evident what a benefit the new line was to the farmers on the North side, while we on the South with no river to contend with rejoiced muchly. And yet it must be understood that "a day" meant anything from fourteen to eighteen hours and my own distance of fourteen miles, with hills,and horses not always in the best condition, heavy loads, deep snow, loading up in the dark, eating frozen sandwiches at noon to save the cost of buying a hot dinner, in temperatures of twenty to thirty below zero, brings memories of long and strenuous days. In the Spring, all that could be taken out of the wonderful bridge, was stacked on the river-bank or it would have gone out with the ice, which meant re-building between seeding and harvest. The following year the same proceedure was repeated, but in the Spring of 1912 the Government put in a bridge which has done yeoman service until this day, costing around forty thousand dollars. How many ever pause to think when driving onto even a small bridge, of the amount of work which has been done to smooth their path or could imagine themselves transported to a country without one sign of man's handiwork! During the six years before this bridge was built the river had to be forded in summer and many were the heartbreaking predicaments fought

out in that spot. The semi quicksand bottom was always treacherous and there is a perfectly good cook-stove underneath which a settler was unable to rescue when his wagon-box floated off and turned over with his furniture. I went to Lloydminister to haul out a new-comer with his family and effects and upon coming to the ford, one fool horse stopped to drink while the other went ahead, just managing to twist the neck-yoke enough to let the pole fall into the sand. Though I jumped into the water and put the pole back at once, we were down in the sand hopelessly stuck, having to carry the family and furniture ashore, the horses being unable to move the empty running-gear until we had got poles and levered it up. On another occasion a neighbour was crossing when the water was too deep, the box floating off and sinking with just one corner sticking out. This unfortunate chap could not swim and sat in the middle of a turbulent river, yelling for hours and expecting to sink at any moment, his cries being heard only by a miracle as his rescuer was almost two miles away when he heard him and it was just dark as he was hauled ashore through the water by a rope. There was a poor family who came to locate on the North side of the river, having no outfit or means at all. The man dug a cave in which the family lived for a year or more while he got what work he could for wages. One whole winter they lived entirely on boiled wheat, the wife occasionally visiting in order to get a cup of tea. Years after they had left the district, one of the sons returned to get work, being now a big strong fellow. He rode in my wagon to town when leaving and told me about the old days, a big grin on his face when speaking of the boiled wheat which he said "tasted pretty good, all the same, as the old man ladled it out". For many years, until the roads were graded and the land broken, we had some mighty exciting and anxious times owing to prairie-fires, the whole country being covered with a heavy growth of grass known as prairie wool, which made a terrible fire when dry and would burn at most times of the year. This prairie wool, which has become almost a thing of the past, was about the most wonderful feed in the world. Horses and cattle could live upon it entirely and do well, my horses working hard in the lean years, with no oats at all, and by giving them a week or two of idleness between seeding and breaking I was able to accomplish a considerable amount of work without them becoming too poor. This grass will accumulate from year to year if not grazed, each years growth becoming naturally cured in the fall and remaining excellent feed, though the animals will pick out the new growth first, but cannot avoid having to take about half the old with it. When the snow is deep they will dig themselves almost out of sight and graze away contentedly keeping in fine condition, but of course this is a thing of the past, as the grass is eaten as it grows now and there is no accumulation, which would make it a case of all

digging and very little feeding. When it is over grazed or burned by prairie-fire it takes many years to come back as the sun plays on the ground and dries it out, without the protection of the thick matted growth. In the first years the lone settler would see a fire coming towards him and the trick was to have a ring of ploughing around the buildings so that while the fire was yet afar off, he could start a fire from his guard which would run wildly away with the wind on one side and creep slowly against the wind towards the oncoming fire, which it would meet far enough away to prevent the fury sweeping down on his buildings, against which nothing could be done. This method was strictly illegal as it caused the main fire to progress by mile jumps and checkmated any efforts which might be in progress to fight it, but after all, if we were to destroy the Paradise which the Indian knew, in one generation, and produce enough food to keep Europe from starving while they killed twenty-million people, fire was really the best method. When the country became more settled, we had to bar this method for our own sakes as it was necessary to save the feed and ones neighbour was too near, so we had to fight the fires with wet sacks, sometimes for hours and most of us have had our eyebrows burned off, faces black as niggers and fighting until we could hardly stand.

One man had some haystacks in the river flats with a guard around them and when he saw the fire was going to sweep to them, he had just time to jump on a horse and gallop down to burn back from the guard. By the time he got there the fire was close and he had no more than got his guard lighted when the main sweep was upon him, so the only thing he could do was to get himself and the horse inside the guard and crouch against the hay. He told me that the horse was so scared that he lay down beside him like a dog, his clothes were smouldering, his hair singed and the stacks caught fire, but the fury passed and he was able to put out the stacks before they got too well started, and all was well, though he would not repeat the performance for anything. One year of drought when the crop failed entirely and feed was non-existent I was greatly consoled to know that I had one-hundred acres of prairie wool which had been accumulating for three years, putting me in a good position for feed and leaving a nice quantity for sale at a good price, but just as I had everything ready to cut it, a fire came along, and it went with the wind. This would easily have gone two loads to the acre and was the last patch of wool in this district to be replaced by wild oats, stinkweed and sow-thistle which

herald the final consummation of modern progress.

In the early years the mosquitoes were a veritable plague and I have seen the horses so covered that it was exactly as though they had a blanket on them, and can well remember having a branch in each hand, perpetually beating my head as I walked to a neighbours, the little devils rising up like smoke from the prairie wool. These pestiferous, multitudinous little Dervishes must have been what took the joy out of life for the proud Indian, since there must always be something. I have been so nearly frantic with them that I remember unhitching, letting the horses into the stable loose and banging the door shut and rushing into the house to bury my face in the blankets, though they never raised lumps on me and I was quite comfortable as soon as I got away from them. Nansen tells us that when in Greenland the skitters were so thick at one place that they had to eat them with their food, it being impossible to brush them off and get the food to their mouths without any, which statement I can duplicate from my own experience---- but it has been said that a few fleas are good for a dog,-----it keeps him from brooding on being a dog. They will return here and no doubt be a nuisance when the wet seasons come again, but they can never be anything like they were before the wool was burned off and the land cultivated. We also have the Mosquitoe-Hawk (Darning-Needle) a beautiful creature about four inches long with dual wings, and it gave me great joy to watch them as they played to and fro in vast numbers catching mosquitoes with a polite nip, letting them flutter to the ground while they caught the next, without ceasing, getting a little juice from each one to repay them for their dexterity. There is a Nose-fly (so called) of which the horses are so afraid that it is impossible to work them without a muzzle, and the Heel-flies chase the cattle into the lakes as they do in all countries. In order for sleep to be possible at all, it was necessary to make the fire smoke so that we had to go outdoors and as soon as it was possible to live inside, we went in and shut everything tight---and woe to us, if a mere one was overlooked as nothing has yet been discovered that will prevent a mosquitoe practising his air on the G string.

1840

Twenty-One.

By G. Douglas Miles.

In the winter of 1916-17 I was in charge of the affairs of a young Bachelor farmer who was fighting for his King and Country in France, and had occasion to visit the City of Edmonton in connection with his business. When I left home it was a beautiful warm day in February, and as we had not been treated to one of these delightful spells for a long time, I looked for it to last a week and left with a light coat and stylish hat, in place of the customary furs (or to be quite truthful, "Sheepskin") with which we cover our "wide open spaces" in the cold weather. But as luck would have it, the wind changed, so that when I landed back in the village, with fourteen miles to drive with horses, it was twenty-five below zero with a wind, a formidable ordeal in any clothes.

It is impossible to borrow heavy coats and fur hats in the cold weather as the outdoor man needs his, and never has more than the one outfit, while the more expensive people have coats which cost between two and three-hundred dollars, and which it would be sacrilege to take out of town, except in a car or train. As Hubbard says, "Friends and Credit (and Fur coats) pursue the man who does not need them. The best I could do was to cover myself in the horse-blankets which I found in the sleigh of the man who gave me a lift to within a mile of my destination, sit in the bottom of the box with my teeth tightly clenched, keeping quite still and silent, any movement allowing my hoarded heat to escape. When the time came, after three hours of posing as one of Natures strong silent men, I leaped from the sleigh, and as I was cold to the bones, it seemed in order to run with a long jumping stride through the deep snow, to restore my circulation, the idea being that a shade more feeling and a little less emotion would be acceptable.

However, although I was already an old-timer, with much hard-earned experience admonishing me to be wise, it soon became painfully evident that there were a few factors which deserved more careful attention than I had bestowed upon them, before taking such a jovial course of action. Being at the end of a long lazy winter, during which the bulk of my work consisted of reading fine books in a comfortable arm-chair, to the accompaniment of my friendly pipe and many cups of tea, I had not run far before discovering that a foot race at minus twenty-five, was distinctly the wrong medicine, however willing the spirit might be. When I slowed to a walk, it was impossible to prevent myself blowing like a grampus, although the great quantity of intensely cold air

I was taking into my lungs was freezing me up inside, in a most painful and alarming manner. I had a light travelling rug which I put over my head to protect my ears which were beginning to freeze, but having no means of fastening this, was obliged to hold it round my neck with one hand. As I was wearing gloves instead of mitts (in which the fingers are all together) I found that the hand held to my neck began to freeze, so changed with the other, swinging and banging the first for warmth, but soon found that I could not get the circulation into one hand before the other was freezing. The rug would blow off in the wind, if not held, and as I was now beginning to stiffen with cold over my whole body, I let the rug go, deciding that I would rather freeze my ears than my hands. One of my fond memories, before arriving at the years of indiscretion, is of a pathetic Ditty which told us of the importance of "The little safety pin behind" and though I have seen this perfect invention used in divers manners during my career as a fond husband, I never felt the need of one so badly as I did when I reluctantly allowed my rug to float away. By this time, although I had ceased to have trouble with my breathing, my body was so stiffened that my feet were thirty inches apart, and I was pushing the snow with six inch steps, the flexibility of my knees being reduced to a minimum. If the reader will take a few steps in this position and realize that I am speaking seriously and exactly, he will, I believe, fully understand the plight of a man who is half a mile from warmth, and in deep snow, on such a day.

It was now that I had the brilliant idea, that a log shack was nearer to me than my own house, but upon slowly coming about, realized that I was now facing the wind and an up-hill road instead of going down-hill with the wind, and decided that home was best after all, also setting my mind solidly upon the one object of getting home, while I was still in command of my faculties. The fight now finally settled into a long concentrated struggle to keep plodding, and to resist the temptation to wander, or lie down comfortably, which the descent into a stretch sheltered by woods, seemed to intensify.

At long last, I came to my gate, which I was unable to open, so crawled under thw wire, after which, I found that I could not straighten up properly, and was obliged to proceed with my hands pressed heavily on my knees, in a stooping position, with my legs stiff and straight. Being now able to see the stable, I was encouraged by having something to attract my attention and which enabled me to grope feebly against the

almost accomplished Nirvana, and to dimly realize that I must get into the stable, and not try to get to the house. But there was another fence still to negotiate after crawling under which, I was unable to rise at all, continuing on all fours, which is the last thing I can remember. There was still eighty yards to the stable, or two-hundred-ten to the house, through more than a foot of snow, but how this was done, or why it was done, I have not the faintest idea, my next conscious act being to paddle indoors, from the door-step where I had been lying, after my Son Norman opened the door to go to the stable, no-one having any idea when I would return, nor expecting me then.

It is evident that I continued to progress mechanically until meeting with the obstruction of the door-step, and it is natural to suppose that had I met with some obstruction soon after crawling under the last fence, I should have stopped in the same manner, in which case I should have been found at some later date. Although there was a track to follow from the last fence, it seems a mysterious thing that I should have followed it, and it seems to me that if the brain is set intently enough upon some course of action, it will continue to function independently of one's ego. When I was a boy of thirteen, I was drilled very intensely to sing "I know that my Redeemer Liveth" from the Messiah, having its difficulties deeply impressed upon me by my teacher, so that, although I had been solo boy from the age of nine, and was used to singing at concerts, I became suddenly ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ smitten with stage-fright after singing the first phrase, finishing the work in a state of complete unconsciousness, only awakening to reality when the organ ceased. I could not believe that I had sung a note and was in a terrible state of funk at the supposed fiasco, until after the service ended and the organist patted me on the back, saying I had done well. My Mother told us of an Aunt of hers who would get up in the night and do her housework, in her sleep, not knowing anything about it until she arose in the morning. So perhaps its in the family.

Well, after I had crawled indoors, I was placed in my favourite arm-chair, not too near the stove, but it was just an hour before I felt the slightest warmth, after which, I rapidly came round to normal, and in a few days, with the help of rest and lots of grease for my wounds, I was restored to prime condition. This would have been no pleasant trip, as I well knew, but I should have been in no difficulty if I had not made the almost fatal mistake of running at the start, nor would this have overcome me if

there had been no wind. Familiarity with cold weather breeds contempt until one has felt the icy fingers round one's throat, and a young man cannot imagine that anything could prevent him from moving and fighting, being quite confident that the above plight could never happen to him, and that I must have been a weakling in some way.

Yet my heart and lungs have never had a finger of suspicion pointed at them and no neighbour can say that he ever out-froze me, as we put it, or in other words, that I froze when he didn't under the same circumstances. Someone once said that a good test of vitality, is how much snow one can melt, if placed in a barrel of it, but I forebear to suggest that anyone try this. When the great Nansen's kayaks went adrift in the Arctic, and he was obliged to plunge into the cold water and swim after them, his actual words were, "I felt, however, that my limbs were grudually stiffening and losing all feeling, and I knew that in a short time I should not be able to move them". This evidence from a man of his immense strength, in the prime of life and physical condition, should absolve ordinary people from any charge of being wrongly constituted.

The actual temperature as shown on the thermometer has very little relation to our feelings, and will not tell us whether it is a cold day or not, except, of course in the case of extreme temperatures. I have known days when it has been just zero, that beat me completely, so that I refused to be outside except for what simply had to be done, and on other days, I have found it quite delightful to be out at minus forty.

There is nothing I know of that is quite so beautiful as a frosty morning, with a brilliant sun decking the whole countryside with the living glow of diamonds, matching every hue of the coveted stones, blazing with a profusion that all their wealth could not hope to duplicate---with not the slightest suggestion of arrogance or ownership.

Mine,---and yours!

1845

Twenty-Two

By G. Douglas Miles.

A very usual answer to the question, "What made you come to Canada?, is "Oh, reading the pamphlets!" ---- and there is no doubt but what the powers that be decided it would be good business for someone, to transfer a great number of people to Alberta, for the purpose of farming its virgin soil. The literature or advertising was artistically done, though it was easy to establish the philosophy that it is the man of ambition who emigrates, while the weakling remains cravenly at home, the masses being so constituted, by having been brought up for so many centuries to obey orders and believe what they are told, that they will live for a generation or more under laws which frown upon the least attempt at fighting or quarrelling, yet, when they are told to, they arise in their millions, athirst to kill and maim on a wholesale scale. The truth of the matter is, that the best men had a good position in their homeland, which of course, made emigration unthinkable, while the rest were out of work or saw the end of easy times in sight.

It surely needs no argument to make it plain that no man leaves his native land for ever, if he is doing well and has an outlet for his ambition, nor will he leave his old familiar scenes for another part of his own country, without grave cause.

Love of country is one of the fundamental emotions of mankind, being in no way dependent upon ones condition of life or the beauty and comfort of the land, just as a man's love for his Mother has no connection with the fact that she can play the piano, or is witty. For my part, after all, it is not England that I love, but just Kent, over whose dusty roads I have tramped, footsore and weary, and in whose simple country Pubs I have found rest and refreshment, and within whose boundaries I was born. In spite of all that has been written in ridicule of the rights of birth, the fact remains that it is the only indisputable possession we can have; nothing being able to alter the fact that I am my Father's son or that I was born in Kent, while my right to anything else may be q questionable. I can imagine nothing sadder, than for a man to return home, with his heart full up with desire for the old lanes, woods, sounds, odours etc: of his boyhood, to find it all built up with modern works, utterly destroying all that memory holds dear.

We have an axiom that, though people return to their native land, when they have succeeded here, they always come back, implying that this is a better country, but the truth is that we can never go back in life, and even if our old surroundings have not

changed, we have. If we pause to consider just what we mean by the word "ambition" in regard to emigration, it may be well to have some definition, acknowledging that the beauty of our language is insufficient to compete with the pamphlets, by attempting to say something. The practical meaning of the word is, "the desire to make money", this being the generally accepted sign that a man has reached the top of his profession, just as the mundane Author writes for money and gets it, while the others write for money and do not get it. Taken as a whole, the ambitious Settlers who flocked to Alberta, having no interest whatever in farming, and adopting a system of belting the last bushel of wheat out of the land for a generation, and leaving a desert for posterity, have failed rather miserably, though this is by no means to be charged to their lack of ambition, as the work of destruction is quite complete in many districts, and progressing favourably in the others.

Our younger districts compare with the small boy who asked his Father when crossing a stream, "Father, why 'aint my feet as dirty as yours?" to which the Father replied, "Well, you little fool, 'aint I older than you?".

But the fact is, that in spite of all this splendid pioneering, hardly anyone has made any money and a large per centage are on relief.

It seems strange that people should relinquish all that is worth while in life, to devote their souls to making money under a system which makes it impossible for any but the lucky one in a thousand to meet with any success, when it is so plain that one can enjoy all that is worthy, without riches, and wealth can only be obtained by a process of degeneration. Music, Gardening, Literature, Handicraft, Family, Friends, Loving-kindness, Self-sacrifice, Health, and all the fine things of life, can be enjoyed by all who are fully alive, without riches, while the pursuit of wealth demands that we dismiss all these things from our lives. Wealth must be an accident,---the pure scientist may stumble upon it, while the practical inventor, or as we mean, the man who invents only for money, like Edison, finally succumbs to a vain temptation to steal another mans glory, as in the case of the electric light. Surely we can see the pity of such a case, where a man makes immense wealth and realizing the worthlessness of his ambition, desires the reality madly enough to attempt to steal it.

This country was a Paradise enjoyed by a moderate population of Indians, who were slowly advancing along sane and pleasant paths, their Art, Handicrafts, Honour,

Courage etc: being common to all and appreciated by all, while our modern insanity has replaced all this with a mad rush for money, by hoards of humanity without Art, Honour, or the appreciation of either. Human labour has become a thing of dishonour, so that it walks the streets in enforced idleness, denied every amenity of human existence, the only hope being that war willY come, to provide them with a few days of struggle and endeavour, before life is finished for them, and they return from a world which gave them life, and had nothing to offer but death. The secret of our misery is overpopulation, which is observed in the fecundity of vermin. The degenerate millions of China and Africa admonish us, and among ourselves it is an axiom that the lower the standard of life, the larger the family. This matter of reckless reproduction is encouraged by a system of slavery, which, of necessity makes starvation the foundation of its power, so that the people of Italy are now forced by law to breed like cattle. It would be quite impossible for the world to support its present population, even if the money was printed for that purpose, instead of war, if the standard of living for all is to be above a mere existence, yet we are told that during the last decade the world surplus of wheat has made it necessary for the Canadian farmer to sell greatly below the cost of production.

But of course, our money system has no connection with reality, being a matter of faith, and only the true believer can avoid the usual fate of the infidel. Most people who read this, or meet people who express these thoughts, will find arising within them a feeling of pity or contempt, sensing that the fate of such an one must inevitably be poverty and suffering. But they do not pause to ask why this should be, or whether it is a matter of economic necessity; neither do they appreciate that the great mass of mankind who abandon all the good of life, as being a hindrance to success, also suffer poverty and contempt, or consider what is their own reward, for not daring to think, above a terrified clinging to a mere existence, lest worse should befall.

Nor do those who succeed in acquiring a measure of wealth find life anything but a vexation of spirit, as they tear around in their motor-cars, living in fear of a world on the verge of madness, under an insane system which makes catastrophy inevitable, enduring all the jazz of life, becayse they cannot or dare not dream. All the rich can hope for is to be feared and hated, and they cannot avoid living in fear themselves. If we are pursuing wealth or power, we disguise our movements and act surreptitiously, so

that association is difficult, --- but if we seek knowledge, if our souls are athirst for God, the Communion of Saints is the first essential, and the more who visit and enjoy our garden, the greater our gain and reward. "Comes at times a stillness, as of Even", as it must to us all, if we have any soul left, --- Ah, yes, the man who does not obey the voice of money, is rated a fool by popular opinion, which is another philosophy imposed upon the unthinking, only the money-maker being regarded as wise or worthy of consideration.

How many people have a superior feeling when reading "poor" Robert Burns, condescending to allow his wonderful music to amuse them, and passing over the glory that he revealed?; that man in a million who received, and gave more of life than his whole generation.

"The graybeard, old Wisdom, may boast of his treasures
Give me with gay Folly to live
I grant him calm-blooded, time settled pleasures
But Folly has raptures to give.

The philosophy which is carefully Not imposed upon the mass of people, by which I mean bank managers, politicians, poets,, unemployed, and the rest of us, is that great theory and mystery of money. Whence does it come[illegible], Who controls it? And why?.

We all pursue it to the point of madness, it buys what passes for love and respect, no man's honour is safe from it and no virtue may command it, yet, you hard-headed men of business, I charge you, that you know nothing about it, and your cruelty and ruthlessness is mere sentimentality founded upon ignorance, and you are pursuing a chimera of wickedness and futility, not one in a thousand buying anything one half so sweet as what you sell. It is said that the onlooker sees most of the game, and perhaps we simpletons of the sage-brush are the realists, while you, who reach your logical conclusion in the verminous and muddy trenches, are the sentimentalists, following mere false feeling without reason or reflection, being guided by the animal emotions of fear and obedience, with no knowledge of what you will gain by victory or lose in defeat.

I remember being at a hockey match, when the referee gave a decision which caused the spectators to argue among themselves, at the top of their voices, and one of them, who had lately been released from the asylum, suddenly bawled out, "I've got papers to prove I'm not crazy, and the rest of you 'aint got nothin'.